



National Conference on Weights and Measures

"That Equity May Prevail"

FOR RELEASE: Tuesday, April 1, 2014, 2:00 a.m. EDT

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Scale Industry Complaints on the Rise over False Advertising and Counterfeit Imports

Lincoln, Nebr. Internet shoppers should be leery of low-priced scales advertised on sites such as eBay or Amazon as “legal for trade”, or NTEP Certified according to the National Conference on Weights and Measures (NCWM). NCWM has seen a drastic increase in false or deceptive advertising of scales and scale components as “legal for trade” or “NTEP certified”. Lately, accusations have even pointed toward counterfeit devices; cheap and inferior copies of the real thing.

NTEP is the National Type Evaluation Program administered by NCWM. Most states require NTEP certification for scales used for buying and selling commodities. The certification demonstrates that the scale is designed to meet national standards of design, performance, and durability before it is introduced into the marketplace.

“The complaints have definitely increased, especially with regard to internet advertising” said Don Onwiler, NCWM Executive Director. It used to be simple misplacement of the NTEP logo, but now Onwiler says the complaints are turning toward counterfeit devices that are being imported to the U.S. and sold on the internet. “These are cheap imitations of the real thing, sort of like buying a fake Rolex for \$20 on a street corner,” said Onwiler. “The fake versions would not stand up to design, accuracy and durability standards for commercial use.”

Underwriters Laboratories reports that counterfeit imports are a very real concern. UL established an anti-counterfeiting operations department over 20 years ago, but they are seeing an expansion from low priced, low tech consumer products. Robert Crane, US Customs Program Manager for UL said, “Over the past several years we are now seeing more and more examples of higher expense, greater complexity and a myriad of product types being counterfeited, such as products in the audio/video categories and even medical and dental devices.” Crane added that when it comes to electrical products, 97% of the counterfeit items are coming from China.

NTEP certification means additional expense for the scale manufacturer but the scale industry has been a strong proponent of NTEP. Rob Upright, President of the Scale Manufacturers Association states “The SMA values the NTEP program as a means of ensuring that certified devices consistently meet a minimum standard. Our customers benefit by knowing that the scale they purchase will provide the level of performance required for their application and ultimately the consumer who buys or sells goods on the basis of weight benefits by increasing their confidence in the accuracy of the weight.”

NCWM relies on state and local weights and measures regulatory officials and the scale industry itself to find and report problems associated with false advertising and counterfeiting. NCWM has published and distributed a brochure, “Buying a Scale on the Internet” as a guide for buyers to steer clear of potential pitfalls in selecting a scale, especially from unknown internet vendors.

The National Conference on Weights and Measures is a professional nonprofit association of state and local weights and measures officials, federal agencies, manufacturers, retailers and consumers. NCWM has developed national weights and measures standards since 1905. The organization brings the right interests together to keep pace with innovative advancements in the marketplace.

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