

National Weights & Measures Week

March 1 – 7, 2005



2005 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the National Conference on Weights & Measures. The Conference was established as a way for the weights and measures community to exchange ideas and help standardize methods and procedures. NCWM manages the administration of all Conference activities and committees and operates the National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) with twelve participating laboratories that evaluate new measuring device designs against national performance standards. NIST provides technical support to the committees; publishes NCWM Handbook 44, "Specifications, Tolerances and Other Technical Requirements for Weighing and Measuring Devices," NCWM Handbook 130, "Uniform Laws and Regulations," and NCWM Handbook 133, "Checking the Net Contents of Packaged Goods;" and conducts a coordinated training program based on these handbooks for weights and measures officials and industry representatives nationwide. In 1998, the most recent year available, the impact of the NCWM on the US economy was \$4,050,000,000,000, or 52% of the total US Gross Domestic Product.

But weights & measures is more than just the NCWM. The importance of uniformity in weights and measures extends back to the Articles of Confederation in 1781. In Article 9, paragraph 4, the Articles granted the Continental Congress the power of "fixing the standard of weights and measures throughout the united states." This power was reiterated in the US Constitution in Article 1, section 8. The pertinent language there being "The Congress shall have Power...To regulate Commerce...among the several states, ...To fix the Standard of Weights & Measures;". To give an idea of just how important our Founding Fathers considered weights and measures to be, in the Articles the fixing of the standard of weights and measures and the regulation of the coinage were treated in the same paragraph. In the Constitution, they are in the same sentence.

Today, there are over 3,400 persons involved in the weights and measures field, conducting inspections and setting uniform regulations and training. And according to recent study, this costs the average citizen just fifty cents per year.

Here in Hamilton County, we are proud of our Inspectors and the work they perform. We strive to make sure their training and equipment is current, up to date, and certified by the State of Ohio. So please join with us in celebrating National Weights and Measures Week.

Some related links of interest:

National Conference on Weights and Measures <http://www.ncwm.net/main.html>

Central Weights and Measures Association <http://www.ncwm.net/main.html>

Ohio Weights & Measures Association <http://www.owma.net/>

National Institute of Standards and Technology
– Office of Weights and Measures <http://ts.nist.gov/ts/htdocs/230/235/owmhome.htm>

Handbook 44 – Specifications, Tolerances, and Other Technical Requirements
for Weighing and Measuring Devices <http://ts.nist.gov/ts/htdocs/230/235/h44-05.htm>

Handbook 133 – Checking the Net Contents of Packaged Goods
<http://ts.nist.gov/ts/htdocs/230/235/h1334-05.htm>

International Organization of Legal Metrology <http://www.oiml.org/>

Ohio Department of Agriculture – Division of Weights and Measures
<http://www.ohioagriculture.gov/weights/>

Declaration of Independence <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=2>

Constitution of the United States <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=9>

References: Portions of this document are from the National Bureau of Standards (NBS) Circular 593 “The Federal Basis for Weights and Measures” (Ralph W. Smith, ?).

Some statistical information is from the National Conference on Weights and Measures web site.