

Weighing and measuring equipment for trade use

Trading Standards Information

www.southwark.gov.uk

1. Introduction

All weighing or measuring equipment in use for trade purposes is controlled by Weights and Measures legislation. This includes scales, weights, petrol pumps and length measures.

2. Main legal requirements

Most equipment is required to be of an approved form and must be 'passed as fit for use for trade' or go through 'initial verification' by an Inspector of Weights and Measures (Trading Standards Officer) or an 'approved verifier'.

This process ensures that the equipment is suitable for its intended purpose and that it is sufficiently accurate. If the equipment is correct it will either be 'stamped' with a Crown, an identification number and a year mark or, more likely now, stickered under EU regulations (see section 3).

The Crown stamp (an example is illustrated) can be found in the following places;

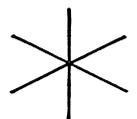
- On lead plugs on old weighing machines (but not on newer electronic designs)
- On the underside of weights
- On capacity measures such as a pint glass (if in use prior to October 2006)
- On the end of length measures
- On lead seals attached to the adjustable parts of petrol pump meters (but not on new designs approved under EU controls)



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Equipment not bearing a stamp or CE mark must not be used for trade. It is an offence to have, or use, seriously incorrect equipment and to alter equipment so that it is incorrect after it has been stamped.

If an Inspector finds equipment that is incorrect the stamp or sticker may be obliterated by a six pointed star as illustrated. The equipment must not be used until repaired and re-stamped or stickered. Alternatively a notice may be given requiring repair within a specified period.



It is therefore prudent to keep equipment maintained by a competent service organisation.

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3. EU controls on weighing & measuring equipment

A European system is now in place for measuring instruments. Trade scales **must** have certain stickers or markings applied to them. The main ones to look for are a small green sticker with the letter 'M' on it in black and a CE mark. This will usually be accompanied by an identification number of who approved the scale. The sticker or mark identifying the approver may or may also have a crown logo. An accuracy class is also indicated (this could be Class I, II, III or IIII). Class I being the most accurate. For most general retailers class III accuracy is suitable. Examples of marking are shown below.



CE mark



M sticker

0522 or



Identification no.of verifier



Accuracy class

Petrol pumps and capacity serving measures, such as pint and wine glasses will also now have to bear the CE mark and an identification number. The marks can only be applied by the manufacturer, approved verifier or an Inspector. Similar controls exist to that for Crown stamped equipment.

4. Common problems with scales

Scales can give incorrect readings because of poor practice or misuse;

It is most important to use scales on a level surface, most will incorporate a level indicator device so make sure it reads level.

Scales must be correctly balanced before use with any indicators reading zero (on electronic scales the digital indications should not be blank prior to weighing). If the scale does not start at zero incorrect readings may be given.

Strong draughts caused by a breeze or air conditioning systems affects some scales. Make sure you consider these problems when siting the scale.

Finally, when serving customers always ensure they can see the scales and its indications.

5. Customer check weighing scales

Scales provided for use by the customer as a check before purchase do not have to be 'stamped' but must still be accurate. Inspectors check customer check scales as part of their routine inspections.

6. What happens if I don't comply with these requirements?

These requirements are detailed in Regulations made under the Weights and Measures Act 1985 and European Communities Act.

Failure to comply could result in equipment being forfeited and prosecution. On conviction the courts may impose a fine of up to £5000. If equipment is used fraudulently the courts can impose an unlimited fine or a sentence of up to 2 years imprisonment, or both.

7. Further information

If you require further assistance on these requirements, or would like additional information leaflets, please contact us at the address given.