

# Southern Weights & Measures Association

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159th Edition

SWMA Newsletter

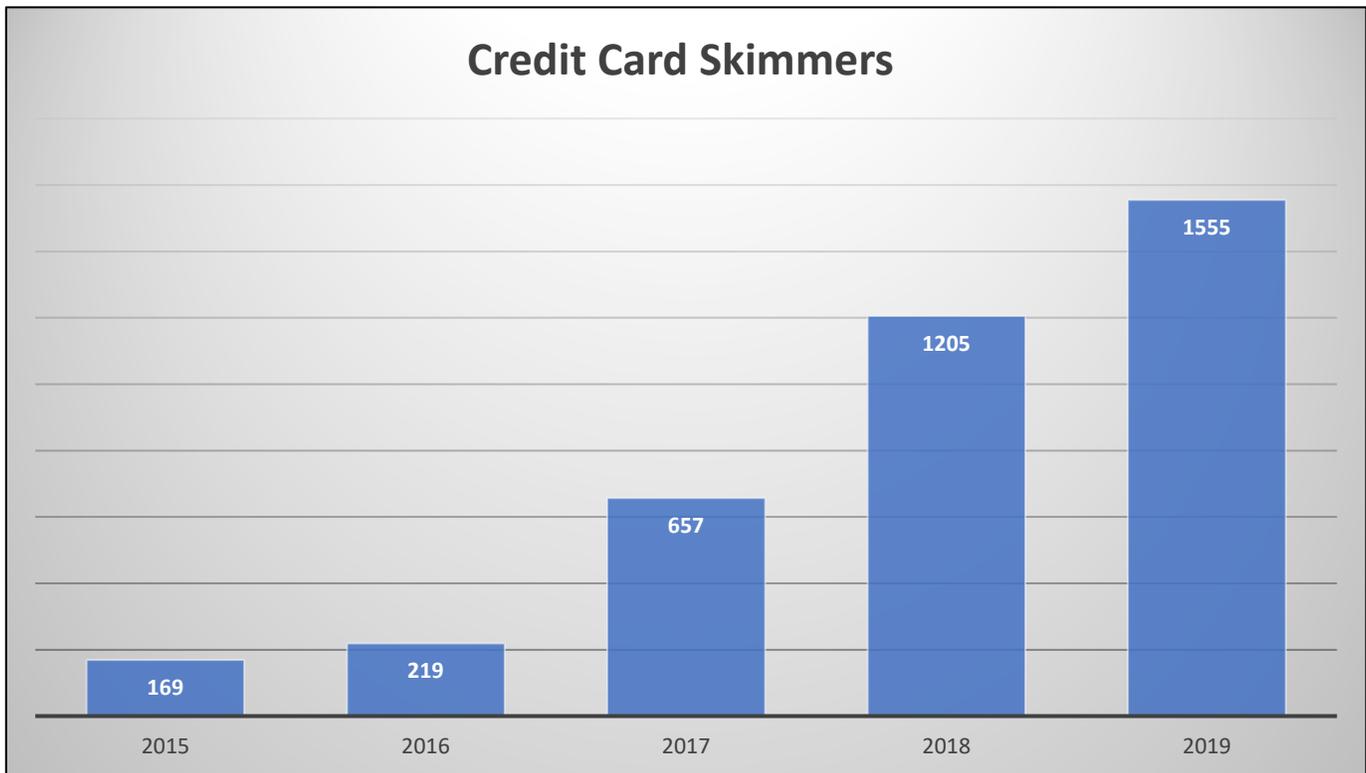
January 2020

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## JURISDICTIONAL NEWS

### FLORIDA

- Both petroleum labs received funds to purchase new equipment, including gas chromatographs, flash point testers, biodiesel content analyzers and digital densitometers. Most notably, our Tampa Lab has received two new Gas Chromatographs (GC) bringing both our labs on par with each other in terms of newer equipment. The Tampa Lab is in the process of validating these instruments and implementing a newer updated screening method for distillation. Once finished, both labs should be able to process 100 to 150 samples per day and with each lab having two GCs at their disposal, major delays due to instrument issues should be of minimal concern.
  - The Florida metrology laboratory is currently working on its 2019-2020 NIST submission. This year's submission has an additional supplementary management review to ensure laboratories are compliant with the new ISO17025:2017 by the November 2020 deadline. The deadline for this year's submission is November 1<sup>st</sup>. The lab has purchased two new comparators to replace irreparable and obsolete comparators. The lab also went through its NVLAP onsite audit in February of 2019 and renewed its accreditation. Due to changes within the department, the lab is planning to renovate a new small volume space within the coming year.
  - We have added an additional 92 inspectors, trainers and supervisors to the NCWM membership rolls and are amending the position description of our inspectors to require passing the NCWM "basic competency" exam within 6 months of hire and one "professional certification" exam within the following 24 months as conditions of employment.
  - The Bureau of Standards has conducted several area-wide "skimmer sweeps" in the last few months along with performing routine gas pump inspections. The conclusion of calendar year 2019 has brought another record setting year for credit card skimmers removed from retail motor fuel dispensers with 1,555 skimmers being removed.
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- Our inspection staff has been focused on performing more package inspection and price verification inspections this year. Our average failure rate is an alarming 30% for price verification inspections and nearly 40 % for net contents inspections.
- The Bureau of Standards has ordered twenty-five new pickups and SUV’s along with two new medium test trucks and two new tractors for our large capacity test units.
- We have placed an order for a new mass flow meter to use for CNG meter testing and will also be participating in the NIST master meter project. We look forward to seeing the data produced from this joint project.
- We have also ordered two, 1,000 lb gas powered weight movers to use in testing animal scales in locations where the scale platforms can’t be reached with the cranes on our medium test units. ⚠

## LOUISIANA

### 2021 SWMA in Nola

Louisiana is excited to host the SWMA meeting in **New Orleans, October 10-13, 2021** (*pending approval of our proposal*)! We are currently finalizing our lodging, program ideas as well as entertainment while you are in Nola! [Official Visitors Guide](#)

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## 2019 Summary

In 2019, our inspection team (47) conducted nearly 28,000 inspections on 101,000 devices, 8,200 inspections of pricing systems and 16,000 package inspections.

## Program Updates

**Fuel Program** - Throughout 2019, the partnership between the United States Secret Service’s Financial and Electronic Crimes Task Force and the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry’s (LDAF), Weights and Measures division has been instrumental in protecting the public from the prolific increase of credit card “skimming” devices placed on gas pumps. Weights and Measures not only acts as a force multiplier, able to respond at a moment’s notice to a suspected compromised location, they are considered by task force officers as subject matter experts as to the inner workings of gas pump systems.

A much-anticipated joint effort to draft legislation that will give the gas station owners more responsibility in protecting their customers will also begin in 2020. “The United States Secret Service in Louisiana considers our partnership with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Weights and Measures division invaluable in protecting the consumer and combating electronic based financial crimes”. **Leslie Pichon**, Special Agent in Charge, **Tara McLeese**, Resident Agent in Charge, **United States Secret Service**

**Price Verification Program-** LDAF Weights and Measures inspectors conducted more than 1,000 price verification inspections in the 4th quarter of 2019 with a 10% rejection rate. Forty-two (42) store locations are currently being charged and called before the Louisiana Commission of Weights and Measures for the misrepresentation of prices and violations of LDAF price display rules. Our program will continue to ensure

pricing integrity and customer confidence in retail and wholesale locations.



**Price Verification Inspection by District Supervisor Fred Larue in New Orleans.**

**Scale Program** - We have implemented an ongoing curriculum for our inspectors to assist them in the understanding of different types of scales, how they work, and the ranges of proper applications. We have emphasized to our inspectors the need for inspections of scales, beyond simply testing for accuracy, and we hope to see better applications and maintenance from device owners moving forward.



**Category one scale inspection by District Supervisor Tim Thomas.**

**Package Program** - We have created a package checking mastery exam to be used in the training of our inspectors. The exam consists of a multiple-choice portion, based on our in-house training manual, as well as a practical portion. The practical is an assessment of an inspector's ability to correctly inspect packages, from commodity selection, scale suitability, and sample selection, all the way to proper evaluation of the results and enforcement action. The practical aspect is observed and graded by our Package Program

Manager and Assistant Director.



**Haughton District Package Inspection training by Nikki Stuart.**

**Heavy Duty (HD) Program** - We have continued to increase efficiency in the field with streamlined scheduling, and reformatted test data templates in our software program. We have plans to continue to update our Heavy-Duty truck fleet this year. The use of Mass Flow Meters in Louisiana has skyrocketed, so we have begun creating specialized training, in conjunction with industry, for our inspectors. We are also working with industry to develop a standardized inspection procedure for Mass Flow Meters, that service agencies can follow when our inspectors are present for certification.

**Metrology** - Our lab has recently completed recalibration of volume test measures for all 47 LDAF inspectors. The mass lab has been shut down during the month of December for renovations and will remain so until the end of February 2020. Volume testing continues and our annual submission for continued traceability has been completed and submitted to NIST.



**Metrologist in Training Jennifer Martin weighing a 2 kg weight in our small mass lab.**

**Professional Development** - Louisiana continues to make strides relative to the professional development of our inspection team. We recently implemented requirements for new employees to be reallocated to an Agriculture Specialist 2 (after one year of experience and six state credentials and one NCWM Basic Competency credential and Agriculture Specialist 3 (after at least two years of experience plus all state credentials and two basic and one professional NCWM credentials. Incumbents will have three years to achieve the same credentials accordingly.



Recent NIST PVI training in Baton Rouge.

**State Training Manual/Exam Update:**

- Course 2: Laws, Rules, and Regulations
- Course 5: Field Standards and Test Equipment
- Course 7: Weighing Devices
- Course 9: Price Verification (v 2.1)
- Course 10: Checking the Net Contents of Packages
- Course 14: Retail Motor Fuels.
- NCWM Exams Passed - 28 Basic and 36 Professional
  - Passing rate seems to be around 50%
  - The following slide will be presented at the 2020 NCWM Interim Meeting, Figure 1.0.



Figure 1.0 Certified Professionals per State, September 2019

Made available by:

**Bobby H. Fletcher, Jr., PhD**

Director, Weights and Measures

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry 

## NORTH CAROLINA

### Motor Fuels Section

The Motor Fuels Section continued to see an increase in the number of consumer complaints and requests received during the last quarter of 2019 due to social media posts and news reports. For the calendar year the section responded to a total of 371 requests and complaints, almost double the annual average. The Agricultural Sciences Building continues to come together and is currently on schedule for completion by the end of the year. In preparation for the move, the Motor Fuels Laboratory has traded several pieces of equipment that were no longer in use towards the acquisition of new equipment that will better fit the needs of the lab in the new building. The electronic inspection portal that will transition the Section's inspections off paper and into an electronic format is almost ready for our field inspectors to begin using it for collecting data from routine inspections. We plan to have the two field trainers use the live system in the next month or two to finish flushing out any bugs in the software while concomitantly training the field inspectors. At the same time, the Section's laboratory quality management system continues to be developed and we have recently transitioned to using Qualtrax software to control all quality documents. The overall goal is to have both the quality management system and the electronic portal up and running prior to taking ownership of the new laboratory in the Agricultural Sciences building.

In personnel related news, **Dajana Gaube-Ogle** joined the lab in the early fall as a full-time employee working in the physical properties testing laboratory. **Dajana** is a graduate of NC State University and had previously been working in this position as a temporary employee. **Jasmine Rivers** also joined the laboratory in late fall of 2019 as an Octane Analyst. **Jasmine** is a graduate of East Carolina University and has three years of prior experience working in the biotech industry.

**Marcus Helfrich**

### Standards Laboratory

The last quarter of the year is usually a slow time for Standards Laboratory. We had our North Carolina State fair from October 17 – 27, 2019 at our local fairgrounds. The theme for the fair was "Nothing Could Be Finer". Some of our area inspectors participate including the Standards Laboratory staff. Senior Metrologist, **Van Hyder** was the coordinator for our booth at this year's fair.

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Training for the quarter included Metrologist, **Joshua Hairston** attending the Mass Metrology Seminar held on the campus on the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Our NVLAP Assessment was conducted November 4-5, 2019. The assessors for this event, were **Carol Hockert** and **David Dikken**. Overall it was a successful assessment.

The grain moisture program ended the 2019 harvest season with a good soybean crop. We look forward to a busy inspection year and preparation for a great wheat harvest in June.

**Sharon Woodard**

## **Weights and Measures**

Greetings from the Tarheel State, North Carolina.

Winter is here although it's warm here in Raleigh. We are about to ramp up our busy seasonal inspections. Airport scales are in January. Fertilizer follows in February, then Mulch in March. We had a lot of short weight problems with fertilizer last year. Maybe this year's inspections will be much better.

Out of 44 positions in my section we are down to just four openings now and one of those is in the HR process as I write. We recently hired the western-mountain heavy scale position. **Carson Hall** is a former scale tech and will fit in well. **Archer Wilkins** accepted our fuel dispenser position and he is progressing well in his training. Maybe by the end of the year we can fill all our positions. Although we might have a retirement to fill also.

As far as equipment, we have ordered four new trucks and are waiting on them being delivered. Hopefully we can receive them and outfit them very soon.

God bless, **Chad Parker**

## **LP-Gas Section**

We performed 1519 inspections of propane containers and systems at the North Carolina State Fair in October.

**Richard Fredenburg** made a presentation about the North Carolina LP-Gas Law and a sampling of LP-Gas Code requirements to a Chinese delegation at Engineered Controls International, Incorporated (Rego Products) in Elon, NC, on November 6.

A vacancy announcement was made in December to solicit applications for our vacant site inspector position. We are waiting for HR approval of our selection now. It has been a couple of years since this program was fully staffed, so we are looking forward to filling this position.

**Richard Fredenburg** 

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The SWMA Newsletter is published quarterly: Annual dues are \$50.

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