

# Southern Weights & Measures Association

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161st Edition

SWMA Newsletter

July 2020

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## JURISDICTIONAL NEWS

### FLORIDA

Greetings from Florida, we hope that this finds everyone doing well.

#### **Field office and administrative functions**

The Bureau of Standards field office remains open and partially staffed, we now have two employees in the office each day to handle the incoming mail, faxes, supplies and shipments. Field office staff are rotating days in the office to handle the workload while the others continue to work from home.

#### **Field Inspections**

Most of our field inspection staff are now back to doing some type of inspection activity, those inspectors with underlying health issues are continuing to work on various projects from home.

Most businesses in Florida have reopened and we are seeing a normalization of activity and a return to regular business hours. With this normalization we have nearly returned to our full routine inspection duties if we can maintain a safe work environment for our staff and not impede business while performing our duties.

A statewide bark mulch sweep is currently being conducted, we are seeing a high failure rate in our initial inspections and hope that these early results are not indicative of a widespread problem.

Petroleum inspectors are performing skimmer sweeps, collecting fuel samples, and performing routine inspections of fuel dispensers.

LP Gas inspectors have resumed conducting full inspections (both safety and meter inspections). Inspectors continue to sweep LP Gas cylinder exchange locations to clear up delinquent permit renewals caused by the pandemic.

Spring cattle scale inspections, although late, are nearly complete.

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### **Petroleum sampling/testing -Sampling and testing by our petroleum laboratories continues at the terminals and at retail gas stations.**

Both Petroleum labs have remained open and fully operational during the pandemic.

RVP/fuel monitoring: - Due to the issuance of state and federal EPA fuel waivers, a sampling plan was implemented to sample and analyze at least two retail stations per week from eight different regions throughout the state to monitor the vapor pressure. As of this week the 87 octane products are meeting class A specifications. The 93 products are a bit slower to conform however, we are anticipating that all products will be in compliance by the July 1st deadline

### **Metrology**

The metrology lab is fully operational and has remained that way throughout the pandemic. 🇺🇸

## **LOUISIANA**

### **Overview**

The second quarter of 2020 has been a challenging time but one we have met head on with numerous successes from our team in Louisiana. After eight weeks of working from home and handling fuel complaints and red tag re-inspections, we began our official transition back into the field on Monday, May 11th. Inspectors went back into the field to begin inspections in low impact areas, specifically motor fuel inspections, scale inspections as well as complaints and red tag re-inspections.

Our motor fuel lab has remained open for complaints and other sampling and our metrology lab started calibrating LDAF devices on May 11 as well. PPE is required as per CDC guidelines and face covering or masks are required to enter our offices. Through a series of Google Hangouts (GHO) since March 26, we, along with Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Florida and Mississippi have developed some best practices regarding dealing with the pandemic.

### **BEST PRACTICES**

1. PPE being available during a crisis.
  2. COMMUNICATION:
    - a. Being flexible and communicating to all staff daily.
    - b. With peers in other states is critical to allow sharing of information and ideas.
    - c. Document and communicate successes, large and small.
    - d. Use multiple methods of communication and verify information is received and understood.
    - e. With staff relative to emotional status dealing with disaster.
    - f. Phones/Hotline messages emailed to staff responsible for responding.
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3. Having online registration and inspection formats in place.
4. Development of copious amounts of online professional development modules available plus mastery of online meeting software to communicate critical information as well as daily updates.
5. Allow staff opportunities to lead and solve problems at their level, people are resilient if given the opportunity.

We are expanding our monthly GHO to include all states in the Southern region and the next videoconference is slated for Thursday, July 16, 2:30 PM CST. With the changes relating to our NCWM annual meeting being cancelled in July as well as our tentative regional meeting in DC in October, our group agreed to transition the conversation to include all SWMA states.

This will give us an opportunity to discuss and communicate as a region on these as well as other relevant issues facing all our states during these changing times. We have Hal (incoming NCWM Chair) and Gene (our NCWM representative) in our region and we can have a strong voice to help the region as well as NCWM move forward in a positive way.

## Second Quarter Division Outcomes

### Staffing

We onboarded two inspectors during the stay at home duration.

### Professional Development

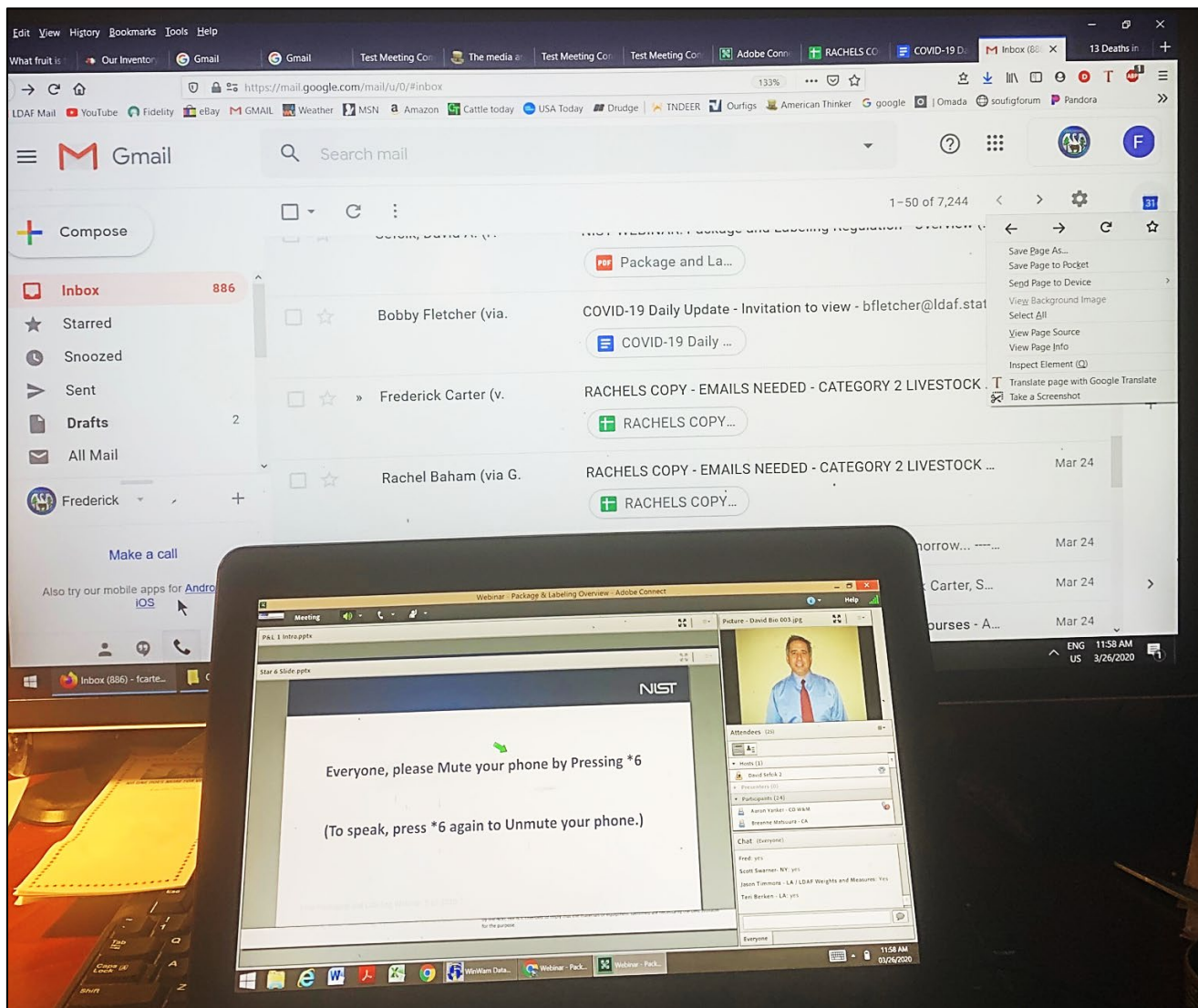
The division of Weights and Measures (W and M) began offering certification exams for our completed Training Manual Courses on April 7, 2019. These exams were open book, and timed, paper exams that were proctored by one of three managers. Once we started working from home, our Professional Development team developed these exams on the Google Forms platform and offered these same exams online beginning on May 9, 2020. Seventy-five (75) percent of the exams that have been successfully completed have been done so in the last month and a half.

# of Exams Passed Between 5/9/2019 & 4/7/2020 (13 months)	# of Exams Passed After 4/7/2020 (1 ½ months)	Total number of Passed Exams	% Passed While Working from Home
58	177	236	75%

Work on the remaining Training Manual courses continued while working from home, and these courses are much closer to being released than before the order. Webinars were also developed by **Paul Floyd** and **Mark Lovisa**. Paul and Mark hosted these webinars, which included: How to Use HB44, Scale Divisions, Scale Tolerances, How to Inspect Rail Scales, Introduction to Mass Flowmeters, Legal Foundation of Louisiana's Package Program, Proper Citations and Improved Report Writing. These webinars were offered to every W and M active

employee and we had a 100% participation rate, an average of 25 participants per regional session. After these courses, additional webinars were developed by Regional Enforcement Supervisor, **Mitch Marsalis** and District Supervisor, **Shawn Waguespack**. Mitch and Shawn’s webinars also received 100% participation.

Our Professional Development efforts are going to build on these great successes and continue to improve the delivery and content of these webinars.



NIST Online Webinar.

### Motor Fuels

Although most offices in the state of Louisiana were in a “stay at home order” issued by the Governor, the motor fuels lab was open every day for fuel complaints. Our inspectors were readily available, so when our office received a complaint on fuel quality, they could respond immediately. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture’s motor fuel program received 61 complaints and the motor fuel lab received and tested 124 samples of fuel. We

have continued to expand our complaints as well as routine sampling since inspectors came back to work in the field on May 11th. Since then, we have expanded normal operations in the field.

## Scales and Packages

During the quarantine period, in addition to taking essential actions to keep various production chains operating accurately, the scale and package program mainly focused on professional development. We conducted weekly webinars for each of our three regions, covering topics ranging from the most basic device inspection techniques to more complex procedures like weigh in motion rail scale and mass flowmeter inspections. We also adjusted into a witnessing only method for our taximeter program, in partnership with our licensed service agencies, to practice social distancing. This new method is proving to be very efficient and may stick around beyond the pandemic.

## Price Verification

During the “stay at home order”, no price verification inspections were performed. Twenty-seven (27) Weights and Measures inspectors participated in multiple webinars hosted by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). These discussions entailed the price verification test procedure, sampling plans, randomized sample selection, and evaluation of inspection results. Since May 11, we have increased our daily PVI rate to about half of what it was pre-pandemic to 15 per day.

## Metrology

Prior to the work at home the lab completed 377 calibrations in March. In April, during the work at home order no calibrations were done. The first weeks of April the lab completed NIST Quality Manual and Standard Administrative Procedures rewrites. The last two weeks of April calibrations were restarted for LDAF artifacts with metrologist working alternate days to keep with social distancing rules in place, resulting in a total of 245 calibrations being



performed. In May, the laboratory has all hands on deck and at this time we have completed all LDAF weight and weight kit calibrations during this period.

DAF weight kits and cast-iron weights. Total of 932 calibrations have been performed. We completed calibration for the LDAF Heavy duty trucks weights. Commercial customer appointments are being accepted and our HQ building is back open to the public

### Summary

Our team accomplished some wonderful outcomes during a very difficult time including:

- **932 LDAF artifacts calibrated in metrology.**
- **177 state exams taken and passed.**
- **124 fuel samples analysis conducted from 62 fuel complaints.**
- **50 plus NIST webinars completed.**
- **Daily update emailed to 56 WM staff members.**
- **Daily GHO with Program Managers.**
- **Regular GHO with six other southern state Directors.**
- **Hired two inspector positions.**

Made available by:

Bobby H. Fletcher, Jr., PhD

Director, Weights and Measures

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry 

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

It has certainly been an unusual few months. On the good news side – the Governor just signed a bill for funding the furniture and moving expense for the new Agriculture Sciences Center. Both our labs and the downtown administrative staff will be relocating to this site, we just don't know when as we could not solicit proposals for moving until we had the funds. The building is still on schedule, to be turned over to NCDA&CS mid-December. We are still seeking funds for utilities and operations of the facility.

### **Motor Fuels Section**

The recent pandemic resulted in the Motor Fuels Section limiting our activities to only respond to complaints and to conduct follow-up investigations from Mid-March through the month of May. During this period the staff focused on completing training on the fundamentals of the new quality management system and updating station information in the new online inspection system.

In personnel related news, inspectors **Julia Kanagy** and **Shelby Sloan** both retired in April for health-related reasons. Shelby had been the inspector in the Wilmington area for fourteen years and Julia had served in the southwestern region of the state for almost five years. In addition, Inspector **Nikki Brown** resigned in early March after four years of service to move to Tennessee with her family. All three inspectors will be very much missed, and we appreciate all their hard work and effort.

**Marcus Helfrich**

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## Standards Laboratory

Due to Covid-19 quarantine, all in-person training and conferences have been revised to a virtual schedule. The regional Southeastern Measurement Assurance Program, SEMAP, training which was supposed to be held in Lexington, Kentucky scheduled for March has been postponed until a later date. Metrologist **Joshua Hairston** and Quality Assurance Manager **Robert Rogers** were selected to represent North Carolina during this training process.

Our Grain Moisture Section completed SRWW harvest at the beginning of June. We were able to collect adequate grain in the desired moisture ranges for the 2020-2021 testing season! We are also working to complete all field inspections that were put on hold due to the COVID-19 quarantine. We are looking forward to a good corn harvest in late summer.

**Sharon Woodard**

## Measurement Section

Greetings from the Tarheel state, North Carolina.

As with the last update, everyone is still dealing with the changes the virus has brought. Our staff was placed on suspended/limited inspections for about two and a half months. We covered complaints and that was about it as we were ordered to stay at home. Business grinded to a halt. Hiring has been placed on hold and our vehicle outfitting hit a delay. Yea there was not much going on. (I built a deck at the house 😊)

A few weeks ago, we finally returned to our inspections but the new normal is not normal at all. All the masks and PPE we can gather has been given to our inspectors and slowly we are returning to inspections. We are still focusing on small rural locations to limit exposure to large crowds and doing the best we can to remain safe. Our vehicles are starting to be worked on again, and I hope to begin some hiring soon. Maybe the next three months will be closer to the old normal.

God Bless,

**Chad Parker** 🙏

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

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