

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Orange County Public Works Division Launched Investigation that Resulted in Settlement with Consumer Goods Giant Unilever**

*The County's Weights and Measures program protects consumers by ensuring they get what they pay for.*

Orange County's Weights and Measures program played a critical role alongside the County's District Attorney's Office (OCDA) in obtaining a settlement last month of over \$770,000 in civil penalties and costs in a consumer protection lawsuit against Unilever United States, Inc. (Unilever). The lawsuit focused on advertising and packaging of certain varieties of its Axe hair styling products in a deceptive manner.

The Weights and Measures program conducted an investigation and disassembled Axe containers purchased in local stores and found that the container tubs misrepresented the quantity of the hair product they contained because they were fraudulently constructed and also contained substantial empty space. The Weights and Measures program is within the County's Agricultural Commissioner's office, a division of Orange County Public Works.

Unilever, the large international consumer goods company, has been ordered to pay \$750,000 in civil penalties, \$24,000 in costs of investigation to OCDA, and about \$3,900 in costs of investigation to the Orange County Department of Weights and Measures. Unilever has also agreed to strict injunctive terms barring it from engaging in unfair or deceptive sales and advertising practices in the future.

The final judgment, which was signed on April 23 in the Superior Court of California in Orange County by the Honorable Franz E. Miller, includes injunctive terms and orders the defendant to pay over \$770,000 in civil penalties and costs of the investigation and prosecution.

Unilever is restricted from misrepresenting the size or quantity of products by using oversized packaging and is restricted from manufacturing, selling, distributing or advertising Axe hair products packaged in a fraudulent manner.

The Weights and Measures program is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of all weighing and measuring devices used commercially in Orange County. The devices are tested for accuracy and inspected to determine if they are appropriate for their intended use. As with the Unilever case, the Weights and Measures program initiates such investigations when it receives a complaint from the public.

The program provides a basis of value comparison and fair competition among businesses by ensuring accuracy of weighing and measurement systems, which ultimately protects consumers. The Weights and Measures program inspects and certifies over 177,000 weighing and measuring devices and price scanners at 10,655 locations in the county.

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