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Ink Jet Cartridge Labeling, Is Count Enough?

By Tom Coleman

Recent questions concerning terms used to label ink jet cartridges has prompted an analysis of the issue. While most ink jet labels indicate "net content" in terms of count only, labeling requirements note additional information should be provided in the form of liquid measure.

The model weights and measures law contains several relevant sections that apply to ink cartridges. "Method of sale" requires accurate and adequate quantity information that permits the buyer to make price and quantity comparisons. A declaration of quantity in terms of count shall be combined with appropriate declarations of the weight, measure, and size of the individual units unless a declaration of count is fully informative. Count alone does not fulfill this requirement. Further, the model law states, "No person shall represent the quantity in any manner calculated or tending to mislead or in any way deceive another person." If count alone does not provide "accurate quantity information," consumers are certainly being misled or deceived and cannot possibly make price and quantity comparisons.

In addition to requirements in the model law, the packaging and labeling regulation affirms that, if there exists a firmly established general consumer usage and trade custom in terms that express a declaration of quantity of a particular commodity, such declaration of quantity may be expressed in its traditional terms, provided such traditional declaration gives accurate and adequate information as to the quantity of the commodity. Count alone does not fulfill this requirement. Any net content statement that does not permit price and quantity comparisons is forbidden.

In conclusion, the ability of a consumer to make price and quantity decisions without being misled is basic. If count alone does not meet the requirements, a declaration in terms of count shall be combined with appropriate declarations of liquid measure.