



While there is much to be said for supporting local businesses, many consumers purchase commercial scales from vendors on the internet for convenience and pricing. This guide is designed to help consumers through the process of purchasing a commercial scale from an internet vendor.

BE AWARE OF REGULATIONS

Most states require National Type Evaluation Program (NTEP) Certification for new commercial scales that will be used in business for buying and selling. The NTEP Certificate provides confidence that the model meets minimum regulatory standards for design and performance. Online shoppers can see the NTEP name, logo and phrase “Legal for Trade,” and assume the commercial scale will meet minimum regulatory standards, but that’s not always the case.

Even though the NTEP name and logo are trademarked, less reputable vendors have been known to use it without a license and in misleading or deceptive ways. Here are some steps to take to make sure your commercial scale meets minimum regulatory standards.

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Buying Commercial Scales Online

The importance of NTEP Certification
for new scale purchases

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Look for information that identifies the manufacturer, model and NTEP Certificate number.



Many scales come as a single instrument similar to what you might see on a deli counter at a local grocery store. Other scales are advertised and sold as individual components, which when added together, make up a complete scale. In this case, each of the components must have their own NTEP Certificate number. The NTEP logo placed in an ad implies that the complete scale system is certified when, in reality, one or more components may not be.

If the vendor discloses information on the separate components of the system, that's a good sign and a tool for additional verification.

Find the NTEP Certificate of Conformance.

A searchable database is available on the National Conference on Weights and Measures' (NCWM) website at ncwm.com/ntep-certificates. The NCWM is the standards organization that administers NTEP.

On this website, you can find and download actual certificates. Many certificates even have pictures for comparison. The certificate will describe whether it applies to a component such as an indicator, a platform, the load cells, or if it applies to a complete scale.

For help, contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA)'s Weights and Measures Program.

Do you know who you are buying from?

Look on the website for a business name, a physical address, phone number and email address. Reputable businesses provide their identity and contact information.

What does the phrase "Legal for Trade" mean?

The phrase "Legal for Trade" is often misused, even by reputable dealers. No scale is legal for trade until the regulatory authority says so. NTEP Certification provides some assurance that it is manufactured to meet national standards, but there are other factors to consider like suitability, proper installation and accuracy.

When comparing prices, consider the big picture.

NTEP Certification is merely the regulatory standard. Some NTEP Certified scales are higher quality than others and many have value-added features helpful to businesses. Consider whether the vendor has an authorized local dealer who knows the legal requirements, can properly install and calibrate the scale and will be available after the sale.

If in doubt, contact NDA's Weights and Measures Program.

They won't tell you what to buy, but they can tell you what not to buy. Many vendors also maintain lists of licensed sales and service vendors who have demonstrated understanding of the requirements necessary for a scale to be "legal for trade."