

[Print This Article](#)

George Runner: The water softener bait and switch

SCV Voices

We've all been victims of a bait and switch: a sales tactic in which an item is used to attract customers who, once lured, find themselves receiving something different than what was offered.

It's never a pleasant experience, but there is something particularly offensive when public officials engage in this dishonest tactic — they are supposed to be working for us.

Unfortunately, L.A. County Sanitation Districts — a collection of 24 agencies including one in the Santa Clarita Valley — were guilty of this behavior when they recently reneged on their promise to keep sewer rates low if residents voted to ban the use of water softeners.

Measure S, which voters approved last November, required homeowners to remove home water-softening systems within the local sanitation district's service area in order to lower chloride levels in the Santa Clara River, as required by the state of California.

For years, sanitation officials have claimed that sewer rates would increase substantially unless water softeners were removed from Santa Clarita Valley homes.

In fact, one official said, "if it (Measure S) doesn't pass, residents could face a hefty property tax hike — as much as \$400 a year — to finance a \$350 million desalination system."

The Sanitation Districts used this argument to convince me to author Senate Bill 475, which put in motion Measure S.

This legislation was designed to avoid the drastic rate increases and address chloride levels in a way that empowered voters to be involved in the decision making.

As expected, voters dutifully passed Measure S, believing that sanitation representatives were telling them the truth. However, despite the passage of Measure S, the Sanitation Districts announced recently that the average sewer assessment rate would be increased from \$14.92 to \$47 per month — more than triple the current rate!

District officials claim that the rate hike is necessary to install new micro-filtration

systems in Santa Clarita's two treatment plants to address chloride levels in the Santa Clara River.

Guess what? That cost is \$385 a year, which looks remarkably similar to the cost voters were told they would be able to avoid by voting for Measure S.

One wonders if voters would have voted down Measure S had they been told the truth. If voters knew that rates would be increased whether the measure was approved or not, they may have chosen to keep their water softeners.

In fact, a Sanitation Districts news release stated emphatically, "If all automatic water softeners aren't removed now, sewer bills may be higher forever."

Does that mean the rate increases of the same proposed levels are somehow going to be temporary now? I don't think so, and voters got duped.

If the L.A. County Sanitation Districts were banking on the fact that removing the water softeners would prompt the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Board to change the rules for them to avoid treatment costs, they should have been honest with the voters about that.

I agree it is an outrage that the Regional Water Quality Board did not send representatives to informational hearings to help explain the problem to Sanitation Districts customers.

But what's more troubling is that the Sanitation Districts abused the trust of the voters when they sold Measure S as the only way to avoid higher sewer assessment rates.

Sanitation officials were either insincere with voters or engaged in clear bait-and-switch tactics, and I think our public officials should be held to a higher standard.

George Runner is a Republican representing the 17th District in the California Senate. His district includes portions of the Santa Clarita Valley. Runner's column represents his own views, not necessarily those of The Signal.

<http://www.the-signal.com/news/article/13282>

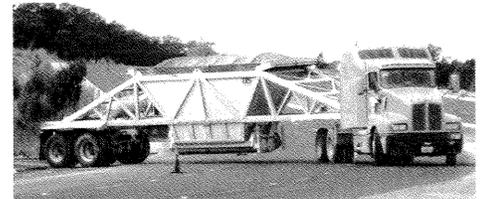
ANNUAL USAGE OF WATER SOFTENER SALT BY CALIFORNIA'S CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES *

<u>INSTITUTION</u>	<u>CITY</u>	<u>QUANTITY – LBS</u>	<u>QUANTITY - TONS</u>
Pelican Bay SP	Crescent City	1,250	0.6
CA Correctional Center	Susanville	2,450	1.2
High Desert SP	Susanville	4,000	2
R.A. McGee CTC	Galt	2,500	1.3
San Quentin SP	San Quentin	30,000	15
CA Medical Facility	Vacaville	600,000	300
CTF Soledad	Soledad	590,000	295
Salinas Valley SP	Soledad	18,250	9.1
CA Men's Colony	San Luis Obispo	500,000	250
El Paso De Robles YCF	Paso Robles	74,000	37
CA Correctional Inst.	Tehachapi	30,000	15
Wasco SP	Wasco	30,000	15
Valley Women's SP	Chowchilla	62,500	31.3
Central CA Women's Facility	Chowchilla	2,500	1.3
Avenal SP	Avenal	29,400	14.7
Ventura YCF	Camarillo	200,000	100
CA SP	Lancaster	40,000	20
CA SP, PIA Warehouse	Lancaster	25,000	12.5
Heman G. Stark YCF	Chino	35,000	17.5
Southern Youth Correctional Reception Center	Norwalk	9,000	4.5
CA Rehabilitation Center	Norco	120,000	60
Ironwood SP	Blythe	5,625	2.8
Preston YCF	Ione	2,500	1.3
Deuel Vocational Institution	Tracy	200,000	100
Northern CA Women's Facility	Stockton	150,000	75
Centinela SP	Imperial	2,500	1.3
R.J. Donovan Correctional Facility	San Diego	100,000	50

TOTAL PRISON SALT 2,866,475 LBS 1,433 TONS

* Based on CA Department of General Services Statewide Salt contract for Water Softener Salt, Contract # 1-05-68-03.

Note: Salt under this contract is to be delivered in 2,450lb pallets of 50lb bags or in bulk via pneumatic truck, dump truck, or belly dump truck.



ANNUAL USAGE OF WATER SOFTENER SALT BY CALIFORNIA'S STATE HOSPITALS*

<u>INSTITUTION</u>	<u>CITY</u>	<u>QUANTITY – LBS</u>	<u>QUANTITY - TONS</u>
Napa State Hospital	Napa	25,000	12.5
Yountville Veterans Home	Yountville	10,000	5
Agnews Developmental Center	Santa Clara	6,000	3
Atascadero State Hospital	Atascadero	200,000	100
Porterville Developmental Center	Porterville	50,000	25
Coalinga State Hospital	Coalinga	10,000	5
Metropolitan State Hospital	Norwalk	600,000	300
Lanterman Developmental Center	Pomona	44,100	22
CA School for the Deaf	Riverside	5,000	2.5
Patton State Hospital	Patton	29,400	14.7

TOTAL STATE HOSPITAL SALT 979,500 LBS 490 TONS

* Based on CA Department of General Services Statewide Salt contract for Water Softener Salt, Contract # 1-05-68-03.

Note: Salt under this contract is to be delivered in 2,450lb pallets of 50lb bags or in bulk via pneumatic truck, dump truck, or belly dump truck.

