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**ENDORSED
FILED**
San Francisco County Superior Court

AUG 31 2005

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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

12 CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH,)
13 a non-profit corporation,)

14 Plaintiff,)

15 v.)

16 ROSS STORES, INC.; BIG LOTS, INC.; TOYS)
17 "R" US, INC.; TOYSRUS.COM, LLC;)
18 WALGREEN COMPANY; and Defendant)
19 DOES 1 through 200, inclusive,)

20 Defendants.)

Case No. ~~08C-05-444522~~

**COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE
RELIEF, CIVIL PENALTIES AND
RESTITUTION**

Health & Safety Code §25249.6 *et seq.*;
(Other)

1 Plaintiff Center for Environmental Health, in the public interest, based on
2 information and belief and investigation of counsel, except for information based on personal
3 knowledge, hereby makes the following allegations:

4 **INTRODUCTION**

5 1. This complaint seeks to remedy defendants' continuing failure to warn
6 individuals in California that they are being exposed to lead and lead compounds (collectively,
7 "Lead"), chemicals known to the State of California to cause cancer, birth defects and other
8 reproductive harm. Such exposures have occurred, and continue to occur, through the
9 manufacture, distribution, sale and use of defendants' soft food and beverage containers that
10 contain Lead (the "Products"). The Products include, but are not limited to, soft lunch boxes,
11 lunch bags and coolers. Consumers, including children, are exposed to Lead when they handle
12 the Products and when they handle or ingest the food and drinks stored inside the Products.

13 2. Under California's Proposition 65, Health and Safety Code §25249.5 *et*
14 *seq.*, it is unlawful for businesses to knowingly and intentionally expose individuals in California
15 to chemicals known to the State to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm without
16 providing clear and reasonable warnings to individuals prior to their exposure. Defendants
17 introduce soft food and beverage containers contaminated with significant quantities of Lead
18 directly into the California marketplace, exposing consumers of their Products, many of whom
19 are children, to Lead.

20 3. Despite the fact that defendants expose children and other consumers to
21 Lead, defendants provide no warnings whatsoever about the carcinogenic or reproductive hazards
22 associated with Lead exposure. Defendants' conduct thus violates the warning provision of
23 Proposition 65. Health & Safety Code §25249.6.

24 **PARTIES**

25 4. Plaintiff Center For Environmental Health ("CEH") is a non-profit
26 corporation dedicated to protecting the public from environmental health hazards and toxic
27 exposures. CEH is based in Oakland, California and incorporated under the laws of the State of
28 California. CEH is a "person" within the meaning of Health & Safety Code §25249.11(a) and
brings this enforcement action in the public interest pursuant to Health & Safety Code
§25249.7(d). CEH is a nationally recognized non-profit environmental advocacy group that has

1 prosecuted a large number of Proposition 65 cases in the public interest. These cases have
2 resulted in significant public benefit, including reformulation of toxic products to make them
3 safer and the provision of clear and reasonable warnings on hundreds of products sold throughout
4 California. CEH also provides information to Californians about the health risks associated with
5 exposure to hazardous substances, where manufacturers and other responsible parties fail to do
6 so.

7 5. Defendant Ross Stores, Inc. ("Ross") is a person in the course of doing
8 business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code §25249.11. Ross manufactures, distributes
9 and/or sells the Products for sale and use in California.

10 6. Defendant Big Lots, Inc. ("Big Lots") is a person in the course of doing
11 business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code §25249.11. Big Lots manufactures,
12 distributes and/or sells the Products for sale and use in California.

13 7. Defendant Toys "R" Us, Inc. ("Toys 'R' Us") is a person in the course of
14 doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code §25249.11. Toys "R" Us
15 manufactures, distributes and/or sells the Products for sale and use in California.

16 8. Defendant Toysrus.com, LLC ("Toysrus.com") is a person in the course of
17 doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code §25249.11. Toysrus.com
18 manufactures, distributes and/or sells the Products for sale and use in California.

19 9. Defendant Walgreen Company ("Walgreen") is a person in the course of
20 doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code §25249.11. Walgreen manufactures,
21 distributes and/or sells the Products for sale and use in California.

22 10. DOES 1-200 are each a person in the course of doing business within the
23 meaning of Health & Safety Code §25249.11. DOES 1 through 200 manufacture, distribute
24 and/or sell the Products for sale or use in California.

25 11. The true names of DOES 1 through 200 are unknown to plaintiff at this
26 time. When their identities are ascertained, the complaint shall be amended to reflect their true
27 names.

28 12. The Defendants identified in paragraphs 5- 9 and DOES 1 through 200 are
collectively referred to herein as "Defendants."

1 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

2 13. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to Health & Safety
3 Code §25249.7, which allows enforcement in any court of competent jurisdiction. The
4 California Superior Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Constitution
5 Article VI, Section 10, which grants the Superior Court “original jurisdiction in all cases except
6 those given by statute to other trial courts.” The statutes under which this action is brought do
7 not grant jurisdiction to any other trial court.

8 14. This Court has jurisdiction over the Defendants because each is a business
9 entity that does sufficient business, has sufficient minimum contacts in California or otherwise
10 intentionally avails itself of the California market through the sale, marketing or use of the
11 Products in California and/or by having such other contacts with California so as to render the
12 exercise of jurisdiction over it by the California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair
13 play and substantial justice.

14 15. Venue is proper in the San Francisco Superior Court because one or more
15 of the violations arise in the County of San Francisco.

16 **BACKGROUND FACTS**

17 16. The People of the State of California have declared by initiative under
18 Proposition 65 their right “[t]o be informed about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer, birth
19 defects, or other reproductive harm.” Proposition 65, §1(b).

20 17. To effectuate this goal, Proposition 65 requires that individuals be
21 provided with a “clear and reasonable warning” before being exposed to chemicals listed by the
22 State of California as known to cause cancer, birth defects and other reproductive harm unless
23 the business responsible for the exposure can prove that it fits within a statutory exemption.
24 Health & Safety Code §25249.6 states, in pertinent part:

25 No person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and
26 intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the
27 state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving
28 clear and reasonable warning to such individual. . .

18. On February 27, 1987, the State of California officially listed Lead as a
chemical known to cause reproductive toxicity. Lead is specifically identified as a reproductive
toxicant under three subcategories: “developmental reproductive toxicity,” which means harm to

1 the developing fetus, "female reproductive toxicity," which means harm to the female
2 reproductive system, and "male reproductive toxicity," which means harm to the male
3 reproductive system. 22 California Code of Regulations ("CCR") §12000(c). On February 27,
4 1988, one year after it was listed as a chemical known to cause reproductive toxicity, Lead
5 became subject to the clear and reasonable warning requirement regarding reproductive toxicants
6 under Proposition 65. 22 CCR §12000(c); Health & Safety Code §25249.10(b).

7 19. On October 1, 1992, the State of California officially listed lead and lead
8 compounds as chemicals known to cause cancer. On October 1, 1993, one year after they were
9 listed as chemicals known to cause cancer, lead and lead compounds became subject to the clear
10 and reasonable warning requirement regarding carcinogens under Proposition 65. 22 CCR
11 §12000(c); Health & Safety Code §25249.10(b).

12 20. Young children are especially susceptible to the toxic effects of Lead.
13 Children show a greater sensitivity to Lead's effects than do adults. Adverse health impacts from
14 Lead exposure generally occur in children at lower blood Lead levels than in adults. Children
15 absorb and retain more Lead in proportion to their weight than do adults. Young children also
16 show a greater prevalence of iron deficiency, a condition that can increase gastrointestinal
17 absorption of Lead. The body accumulates Lead over a lifetime and releases it slowly, so even
18 small doses received in childhood, over time, can cause adverse health impacts, including but not
19 limited to reproductive toxicity, later in life. For example, in times of physiological stress, such
20 as pregnancy, the body can mobilize accumulated stores of Lead in tissue and bone, thereby
21 increasing the level of Lead in the blood and increasing the risk of harm to the fetus.

22 21. There is no safe level of exposure to Lead and even minute amounts of
23 Lead exposure have been shown to permanently reduce mental capacity. Davis, JM, Svendgaard,
24 DJ; "Lead and Child Development"; *Nature* 329:297-300, 1987. One recent study on the effect
25 of childhood Lead exposure declared that even the smallest detectable amount of blood Lead
26 levels in children can mean the difference between an A or B grade in school. Lanphear, BP,
27 Dietrich, K, Auinger, P, Cox, C; "Subclinical Lead Toxicity in U.S. Children and Adolescents";
28 *Neurodevelopmental Disabilities II Platform*, 2000. Another study followed children into
adulthood and found a sevenfold increase in the risk for developing a reading disability among
children exposed to sufficient levels of Lead as toddlers. Needleman, HL, Schell, A, Bellinger,

1 D, Leviton, A, Allred, EN; "The Long-Term Effects of Exposure to Low Doses of Lead in
2 Childhood: An 11-Year Follow-up Report"; *New England Journal of Medicine*; 322:83-88, 1990.

3 22. Defendants' Products contain sufficient quantities of Lead such that
4 consumers, including children, who handle the Products and handle and ingest items stored
5 inside the Products are exposed to Lead through the average use of the Products. These
6 exposures occur through direct ingestion when consumers place items that have been stored in
7 the Products in their mouths, ingestion via hand to mouth contact after consumers touch or
8 handle the Products or items that have been stored in the Products, and dermal absorption
9 directly through the skin when consumers touch or handle the Products or items that have been
10 stored in the Products.

11 23. Any person acting in the public interest has standing to enforce violations
12 of Proposition 65 provided that such person has supplied the requisite public enforcers with a
13 valid 60-Day Notice of Violation and such public enforcers are not diligently prosecuting the
14 action within such time. Health & Safety Code §25249.7(d).

15 24. On May 19, 2005, CEH provided a 60-Day "Notice of Violation of
16 Proposition 65" to the California Attorney General, the District Attorneys of every county in
17 California, the City Attorneys of every California city with a population greater than 750,000 and
18 to each of the named Defendants. The May 19, 2005 Notice of Violation is referred to herein as
19 the "Notice". In compliance with Health & Safety Code §25249.7(d) and 22 CCR §12903(b), the
20 Notice included the following information: (1) the name and address of the violators; (2) the
21 statute violated; (3) the time period during which violations occurred; (4) specific descriptions of
22 the violations, including (a) the routes of exposure to Lead from the Products and (b) Product
23 categories, with a specific non-exclusive example of a Product that is sold and used in violation
24 of Proposition 65 for each named Defendant; and (5) the name of the specific Proposition 65-
25 listed chemical (Lead) that is the subject of the violation described in the Notice.

26 25. CEH also sent a Certificate of Merit for the Notice to the California
27 Attorney General, the District Attorneys of every county in California, the City Attorneys of
28 every California city with a population greater than 750,000 and to the named Defendants. In

1 compliance with Health & Safety Code §25249.7(d) and 11 CCR §3101, the Certificate certified
2 that CEH's counsel: (1) has consulted with one or more persons with relevant and appropriate
3 experience or expertise who reviewed facts, studies or other data regarding the exposures to Lead
4 alleged in the Notice; and (2) based on the information obtained through such consultations,
5 believes that there is a reasonable and meritorious case for a citizen enforcement action based on
6 the facts alleged in the attached Notice. In compliance with Health & Safety Code §25249.7(d)
7 and 11 CCR §3102, the Certificate served on the Attorney General included factual information –
8 provided on a confidential basis – sufficient to establish the basis for the Certificate, including
9 the identity of the person(s) consulted by CEH's counsel and the facts, studies or other data
10 reviewed by such persons.

11 26. None of the public prosecutors with the authority to prosecute violations
12 of Proposition 65 has commenced and/or is diligently prosecuting a cause of action against the
13 Proposition 65 Defendants under Health & Safety Code §25249.5 *et seq.* based on the claims
14 asserted in the Notice.

15 27. Defendants both know and intend that individuals, including children, will
16 handle the Products and handle and ingest items stored inside the Products, thus exposing them
17 to Lead.

18 28. The Products are typically made from polyvinyl chloride ("PVC"). The
19 association between PVC and Lead exposure has been widely discussed in the media in recent
20 years, with particular attention given to products made from PVC that are marketed exclusively
21 to children. Defendants' Products are also made with pigments, many of which contain Lead.
22 Many of the Defendants' Products are exclusively made for and marketed to children.

23 29. Defendants have been informed of the Lead in their Products by the 60-
24 day notice of violation served on them by CEH and from newspaper reports.

25 30. Nevertheless, Defendants continue to expose consumers, including
26 children, to Lead without prior clear and reasonable warnings regarding the carcinogenic or
27 reproductive hazards of Lead.

28 31. CEH has engaged in good-faith efforts to resolve the claims alleged herein

1 prior to filing this complaint.

2 32. Any person "violating or threatening to violate" Proposition 65 may be
3 enjoined in any court of competent jurisdiction. Health & Safety Code §25249.7. "Threaten to
4 violate" is defined to mean "to create a condition in which there is a substantial probability that a
5 violation will occur." Health & Safety Code §25249.11(e). Proposition 65 provides for civil
6 penalties not to exceed \$2,500 per day for each violation of Proposition 65.

7 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

8 **(Violations of the Health & Safety Code §25249.6)**

9 33. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference as if specifically set forth
10 herein Paragraphs 1 through 32 inclusive.

11 34. By placing the Products into the stream of commerce, Defendants are a
12 person in the course of doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code §25249.11.

13 35. Defendants know that average use of the Products will expose users of the
14 Products to Lead. Defendants intend that the Products be used in a manner that results in users
15 of the Products being exposed to Lead contained in the Products.

16 36. The Defendants have failed, and continue to fail, to provide clear and
17 reasonable warnings regarding the carcinogenicity and reproductive toxicity of Lead to users of
18 the Products.

19 37. Lead is a chemical listed by the State of California as known to cause
20 cancer, birth defects and other reproductive harm.

21 38. By committing the acts alleged above, the Defendants have at all times
22 relevant to this complaint violated Proposition 65 by knowingly and intentionally exposing
23 individuals to Lead without first giving clear and reasonable warnings to such individuals
24 regarding the carcinogenicity and reproductive toxicity of Lead.

25 Wherefore, Plaintiff prays judgment against the Defendants, as set forth hereafter.

26 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

27 Wherefore, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants as follows:

28 1. That the Court, pursuant to Health & Safety Code §25249.7(b), assess civil

1 penalties against each of the Defendants in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation of
2 Proposition 65 according to proof;

3 2. That the Court, pursuant to Health & Safety Code §25249.7(a),
4 preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendants from offering the Products for sale in
5 California without providing clear and reasonable warnings, as CEH shall specify in further
6 application to the Court;

7 3. That the Court, pursuant to Health & Safety Code §25249.7(a), order
8 Defendants to take action to stop ongoing unwarned exposures to Lead resulting from use of
9 Products sold by Defendants, as CEH shall specify in further application to the Court;

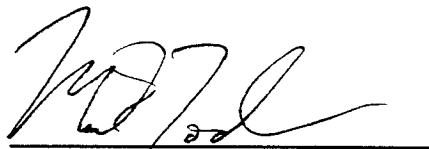
10 4. That the Court, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure §1021.5 and any other
11 applicable theory, grant Plaintiff its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit; and

12 5. That the Court grant such other and further relief as may be just and
13 proper.

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15 Dated: August 31, 2005

Respectfully submitted,

16 LEXINGTON LAW GROUP, LLP

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20 Mark N. Todzo, Esq.
21 Attorneys for Plaintiff
22 CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
23 HEALTH
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