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FILED
Superior Court Of California,
Sacramento
10/28/2009
tcalaustro
By _____, Deputy
Case Number:
34-2009-00061999

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8 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
9 FOR THE COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
10 UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION

Department
Assignments
Case Management 43
Law and Motion 54
Minors Compromise 17

11 RUSSELL BRIMER,

12 Plaintiff,

13 v.

14 AVON PRODUCTS, INC.; and DOES 1-150,
15 inclusive,

16 Defendants.

Case No. _____

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

(Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 et seq.)

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1
2 1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by plaintiff RUSSELL
3 BRIMER, in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California, to enforce the People’s
4 right to be informed of the presence of lead, a toxic chemical found in vinyl handbags sold in
5 California.

6 2. By this Complaint, plaintiff seeks to remedy defendants’ continuing failures to
7 warn California citizens about their exposure to lead, present in or on certain vinyl handbags that
8 defendants manufacture, distribute and/or offer for sale to consumers throughout the State of
9 California.

10 3. High levels of lead are commonly found in and on vinyl handbags that defendants
11 manufacture, distribute and/or offer for sale to consumers throughout the State of California.

12 4. Under California’s Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986,
13 California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 *et seq.* (Proposition 65), “No person in the course of
14 doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to
15 the state to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable
16 warning to such individual. . . .” (*Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.*)

17 5. On February 27, 1987, California identified and listed lead as a chemical known
18 to cause birth defects and other reproductive harm. Lead became subject to the warning
19 requirement one year later and was therefore subject to the “clear and reasonable warning”
20 requirements of Proposition 65, beginning on February 27, 1988. (*27 CCR § 27001 (c); Cal.*
21 *Health & Safety Code § 25249.8.*) Lead shall be referred to hereinafter as the “LISTED
22 CHEMICAL.”

23 6. Defendants manufacture, distribute, and/or sell vinyl handbags containing
24 excessive levels of the LISTED CHEMICAL including, but not limited to, the *Handbag, Brown*
25 *#410019853*. All such vinyl handbags containing the LISTED CHEMICAL shall hereinafter be
26 referred to as the “PRODUCTS.”

27 7. Defendants’ failures to warn consumers and/or other individuals in the State of
28 California about their exposure to the LISTED CHEMICAL in conjunction with defendants’ sale

1 of one or more of the PRODUCTS is a violation of Proposition 65 and subjects defendants to
2 enjoinder of such conduct as well as civil penalties for each such violation.

3 8. For defendants' violations of Proposition 65, plaintiff seeks preliminary injunctive
4 and permanent injunctive relief to compel defendants to provide purchasers or users of the
5 PRODUCTS with the required warning regarding the health hazards of the LISTED
6 CHEMICAL. (*Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a).*)

7 9. Plaintiff also seeks civil penalties against defendants for their violations of
8 Proposition 65, as provided for by California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b).

9 **PARTIES**

10 10. Plaintiff RUSSELL BRIMER is a citizen of the County of Alameda in the State of
11 California who is dedicated to protecting the health of California citizens through the elimination
12 or reduction of toxic exposures from consumer products, and brings this action in the public
13 interest pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7.

14 11. Defendant AVON PRODUCTS, INC. ("AVON") is a person doing business
15 within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.

16 12. Defendant AVON manufactures, distributes, and/or offers one or more of the
17 PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California or implies by its conduct that it
18 manufactures, distributes, and/or offers one or more of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the
19 State of California.

20 13. Defendants DOES 1-50 ("MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS") are each
21 persons doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.

22 14. MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS engage in the process of research, testing,
23 designing, assembling, fabricating and/or manufacturing, or imply by their conduct that they
24 engage in the process of research, testing, designing, assembling, fabricating and/or
25 manufacturing, one or more of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California.

26 15. Defendants DOES 51-100 ("DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS") are each persons
27 doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.

1 16. DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS distribute, exchange, transfer, process and/or
 2 transport one or more of the PRODUCTS to individuals, businesses or retailers for sale or use in
 3 the State of California.

4 17. Defendants DOES 101-150 (RETAIL DEFENDANTS) are each persons doing
 5 business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.

6 18. RETAIL DEFENDANTS offer one or more of the PRODUCTS for sale to
 7 individuals in the State of California.

8 19. At this time, the true names of Defendants DOES 1 through 150, inclusive, are
 9 unknown to plaintiff, who therefore sues said defendants by their fictitious name pursuant to
 10 Code of Civil Procedure § 474. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that
 11 each of the fictitiously named defendants is responsible for the acts and occurrences herein
 12 alleged. When ascertained, their true names shall be reflected in an amended complaint.

13 20. AVON, MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS, DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS,
 14 and RETAIL DEFENDANTS shall, where appropriate, collectively be referred to hereinafter as
 15 "DEFENDANTS."

16 **VENUE AND JURISDICTION**

17 21. Venue is proper in the Sacramento County Superior Court, pursuant to Code of
 18 Civil Procedure §§ 394, 395, 395.5, because this Court is a court of competent jurisdiction,
 19 because one or more instances of wrongful conduct occurred, and continues to occur, in the
 20 County of Sacramento and/or because DEFENDANTS conducted, and continue to conduct,
 21 business in this County with respect to the PRODUCTS.

22 22. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to
 23 California Constitution Article VI, § 10, which grants the Superior Court "original jurisdiction in
 24 all causes except those given by statute to other trial courts." The statute under which this action
 25 is brought does not specify any other basis of subject matter jurisdiction.

26 23. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over DEFENDANTS based on
 27 plaintiff's information and good faith belief that each defendant is a person, firm, corporation or
 28 association that either are citizens of the State of California, have sufficient minimum contacts in

1 the State of California, or otherwise purposefully avail themselves of the California market.
2 DEFENDANTS' purposeful availment renders the exercise of personal jurisdiction by California
3 courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

4 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

5 **(Violation of Proposition 65 - Against All Defendants)**

6 24. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth herein,
7 Paragraphs 1 through 23, inclusive.

8 25. The citizens of the State of California have expressly stated in the Safe Drinking
9 Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California Health & Safety Code § 25249.5 *et seq.*
10 (Proposition 65) that they must be informed "about exposures to chemicals that cause cancer,
11 birth defects and other reproductive harm." (*Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.*)

12 26. Proposition 65 states, "No person in the course of doing business shall knowingly
13 and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or
14 reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual..."
15 (*Id.*)

16 27. On July 17, 2009, a sixty-day notice of violation, together with the requisite
17 certificate of merit, was provided to AVON and various public enforcement agencies stating that
18 as a result of the DEFENDANTS' sales of one or more of the PRODUCTS, purchasers and users
19 in the State of California were being exposed to lead resulting from the reasonably foreseeable
20 uses of the PRODUCTS, without the individual purchasers and users first having been provided
21 with a "clear and reasonable warning" regarding such toxic exposures.

22 28. DEFENDANTS have engaged in the manufacture, distribution and/or offering of
23 one or more of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code §
24 25249.6 and DEFENDANTS' manufacture, distribution and/or offering of one or more of the
25 PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 has
26 continued to occur beyond DEFENDANTS' receipt of plaintiff's sixty-day notices of violation.
27 Plaintiff further alleges and believes that such violations will continue to occur into the future.

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1 29. After receipt of the claims asserted in the sixty-day notices of violation, the
2 appropriate public enforcement agencies have failed to commence and diligently prosecute a
3 cause of action against DEFENDANTS under Proposition 65.

4 30. The PRODUCTS manufactured, distributed, and/or offered for sale or use in
5 California by DEFENDANTS contained the LISTED CHEMICAL above the allowable state
6 limits.

7 31. DEFENDANTS knew or should have known that the PRODUCTS manufactured,
8 distributed, and/or offered for sale or use by DEFENDANTS in California contained the
9 LISTED CHEMICAL.

10 32. The LISTED CHEMICAL was present in or on the PRODUCTS in such a way as
11 to expose individuals to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal contact and/or ingestion
12 during the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS.

13 33. The normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS has caused and
14 continues to cause consumer exposures to the LISTED CHEMICAL, as such exposure is defined
15 by 27 CCR § 25602(b).

16 34. DEFENDANTS had knowledge that the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of
17 the PRODUCTS would expose individuals to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal contact
18 and/or ingestion.

19 35. DEFENDANTS intended that such exposures to the LISTED CHEMICAL from
20 the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS would occur by their deliberate, non-
21 accidental participation in the manufacture, distribution and/or offer for sale or use of
22 PRODUCTS to individuals in the State of California.

23 36. DEFENDANTS failed to provide a “clear and reasonable warning” to those
24 consumers and/or other individuals in the State of California who were or who could become
25 exposed to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal contact and/or ingestion during the
26 reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS.

27 37. Contrary to the express policy and statutory prohibition of Proposition 65, enacted
28 directly by California voters, individuals exposed to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal

1 contact and/or ingestion resulting from the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS, sold
2 by DEFENDANTS without a “clear and reasonable warning,” have suffered, and continue to
3 suffer, irreparable harm, for which harm they have no plain, speedy or adequate remedy at law.

4 38. As a consequence of the above-described acts, DEFENDANTS are liable for a
5 maximum civil penalty of \$2,500 per day for each violation pursuant to California Health &
6 Safety Code § 25249.7(b).

7 39. As a consequence of the above-described acts, California Health & Safety Code
8 § 25249.7(a) also specifically authorizes the Court to grant injunctive relief against
9 DEFENDANTS.

10 40. Wherefore, plaintiff prays for judgment against DEFENDANTS as set forth
11 hereinafter.

12 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

13 Wherefore, plaintiff prays for judgment against DEFENDANTS as follows:

14 1. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(b), assess
15 civil penalties against DEFENDANTS in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation
16 alleged herein;

17 2. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a),
18 preliminarily and permanently enjoin DEFENDANTS from manufacturing, distributing or
19 offering one or more of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in California, without providing “clear
20 and reasonable warnings” as defined by 27 CCR § 25601, as to the harms associated with
21 exposures the LISTED CHEMICAL;

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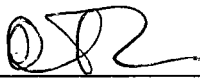
3. That the Court grant plaintiff his reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit; and

4. That the Court grant such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

Respectfully Submitted,

HIRST & CHANLER LLP

Dated: October 27, 2009

By: 

David Lavine
Attorneys for Plaintiff
RUSSELL BRIMER