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ORIGINAL FILED
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

OCT 12 2012

John A. Clarke, Executive Officer/Clerk
BY Cristina Ornelas Deputy
Cristina Ornelas

11 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
12 **COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES – CENTRAL DISTRICT**

13 CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC.,
14 in the public interest,

15 Plaintiff,

16 v.

17 THE TJX COMPANIES, INC., a Delaware
18 Corporation, T.J. MAXX OF CA, LLC, a
19 Delaware Limited Liability Company, and
20 DOES 1-20,

21 Defendants.

CASE NO.

BC 498748

COMPLAINT FOR PENALTY,
INJUNCTION, AND RESTITUTION

Violation of Proposition 65, the Safe
Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement
Act of 1986 (*Health & Safety Code*, §
25249.5, *et seq.*)

ACTION IS AN UNLIMITED CIVIL
CASE (exceeds \$25,000)

22 Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. alleges a cause of action against
23 Defendants THE TJX COMPANIES, INC., T.J. MAXX OF CA, LLC, and DOES 1-20 as
24 follows:

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THE PARTIES

1. Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. (“Plaintiff” OR “CAG”) is a corporation qualified to do business in the State of California. CAG is a person within the meaning of Health and Safety Code section 25249.11, subdivision (a). CAG, acting as a private attorney general, brings this action in the public interest as defined under Health and Safety Code section 25249.7, subdivision (d).
2. Defendant THE TJX COMPANIES, INC. (“TJX”) is a Delaware corporation, qualified to do business and doing business in the State of California at all relevant times herein.
3. Defendant T.J. MAXX OF CA, LLC (“TJ MAXX”) is a Delaware limited liability company, qualified to do business and doing business in the State of California at all relevant times herein.
4. Plaintiff is presently unaware of the true names and capacities of defendants Does 1-20, and therefore sues these defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiff will amend this complaint to allege their true names and capacities when ascertained. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each fictitiously named defendant is responsible in some manner for the occurrences herein alleged and the damages caused thereby.
5. At all times mentioned herein, the term “Defendants” includes TJX, TJ MAXX, and Does 1-20.
6. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges that each of the Defendants at all times mentioned herein have conducted business within the State of California.
7. At all times relevant to this action, each of the Defendants, including Does 1-20, was an agent, servant, or employee of each of the other Defendants. In conducting the activities alleged in this Complaint, each of the Defendants was acting within the course and scope of this agency, service, or employment, and was acting with the consent, permission, and authorization of each of the other Defendants. All actions of each of the Defendants alleged in this Complaint were ratified and approved by every other Defendant or their

1 officers or managing agents. Alternatively, each of the Defendants aided, conspired with
2 and/or facilitated the alleged wrongful conduct of each of the other Defendants.

- 3 8. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that at all relevant times, each of the
4 Defendants was a person doing business within the meaning of Health and Safety Code
5 section 25249.11, subdivision (b), and that each of the Defendants had ten (10) or more
6 employees at all relevant times.

7 **JURISDICTION**

- 8 9. The Court has jurisdiction over this lawsuit pursuant to California Constitution Article
9 VI, Section 10, which grants the Superior Court original jurisdiction in all causes except
10 those given by statute to other trial courts. This Court has jurisdiction over this action
11 pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7, which allows enforcement of
12 violations of Proposition 65 in any Court of competent jurisdiction.
- 13 10. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants named herein because Defendants either
14 reside or are located in this State or are foreign corporations authorized to do business in
15 California, are registered with the California Secretary of State, or who do sufficient
16 business in California, have sufficient minimum contacts with California, or otherwise
17 intentionally avail themselves of the markets within California through their manufacture,
18 distribution, promotion, marketing, or sale of their products within California to render
19 the exercise of jurisdiction by the California courts permissible under traditional notions
20 of fair play and substantial justice. Furthermore, Defendants have purposefully availed
21 themselves of California by deliberately placing products within the stream of commerce
22 with the full knowledge and intent that they be sold and distributed in California, and
23 thereby directed their activities towards, and had a substantial connection with, the State
24 of California.
- 25 11. Venue is proper in the County of Los Angeles because one or more of the instances of
26 wrongful conduct occurred, and continues to occur, in the County of Los Angeles and/or
27 because Defendants conducted, and continue to conduct, business in the County of Los
28 Angeles with respect to the consumer product that is the subject of this action.

BACKGROUND AND PRELIMINARY FACTS

- 1
2 12. In 1986, California voters approved an initiative to address growing concerns about
3 exposure to toxic chemicals and declared their right “[t]o be informed about exposures to
4 chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm.” Ballot Pamp.,
5 Proposed Law, Gen. Elec. (Nov. 4, 1986) at p. 3. The initiative, The Safe Drinking
6 Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified at Health and Safety Code sections
7 25249.5, *et seq.* (“Proposition 65”), helps to protect California’s drinking water sources
8 from contamination, to allow consumers to make informed choices about the products
9 they buy, and to enable persons to protect themselves from toxic chemicals as they see
10 fit.
- 11 13. Proposition 65 requires the Governor of California to publish a list of chemicals known to
12 the state to cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm. *Health & Safety Code*
13 § 25249.8. The list, which the Governor updates at least once a year, contains over 700
14 chemicals and chemical families. Proposition 65 imposes warning requirements and
15 other controls that apply to Proposition 65-listed chemicals.
- 16 14. All businesses with ten (10) or more employees that operate or sell products in California
17 must comply with Proposition 65. Under Proposition 65, businesses are: (1) prohibited
18 from knowingly discharging Proposition 65-listed chemicals into sources of drinking
19 water (*Health & Safety Code* § 25249.5), and (2) required to provide “clear and
20 reasonable” warnings before exposing a person, knowingly and intentionally, to a
21 Proposition 65-listed chemical (*Health & Safety Code* § 25249.6).
- 22 15. Proposition 65 provides that any person “violating or threatening to violate” the statute
23 may be enjoined in any court of competent jurisdiction. *Health & Safety Code* § 25249.7.
24 “Threaten to violate” means “to create a condition in which there is a substantial
25 probability that a violation will occur.” *Health & Safety Code* § 25249.11(e).
26 Defendants are also liable for civil penalties of up to \$2,500.00 per day per violation,
27 recoverable in a civil action. *Health & Safety Code* § 25249.7(b).
- 28

1 16. Plaintiff identified certain practices of manufacturers and distributors of lead-bearing
2 products of exposing, knowingly and intentionally, persons in California to the
3 Proposition 65-listed chemicals of such products without first providing clear and
4 reasonable warnings of such to the exposed persons prior to the time of exposure.
5 Plaintiff later discerned that Defendants engaged in such practice.

6 17. On October 1, 1992, the Governor of California added Lead and Lead Compounds to the
7 list of chemicals known to the State to cause cancer (*Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 27001(b)*).
8 Pursuant to Health and Safety Code sections 25249.9 and 25249.10, twenty (20) months
9 after addition of Lead and Lead compounds to the list of chemicals known to the State to
10 cause cancer, Lead and Lead compounds became fully subject to Proposition 65 warning
11 requirements and discharge prohibitions.

12 18. On February 27, 1987, the Governor of California added Lead to the list of chemicals
13 known to the State to cause reproductive toxicity (*Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 27001(c)*).
14 Lead is known to the State to cause developmental, female, and male reproductive
15 toxicity. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code sections 25249.9 and 25249.10, twenty (20)
16 months after addition of Lead to the list of chemicals known to the State to cause
17 reproductive toxicity, Lead became fully subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements
18 and discharge prohibitions.

19 **SATISFACTION OF PRIOR NOTICE**

20 19. On or about February 28, 2012, Plaintiff gave notice of alleged violations of Health and
21 Safety Code section 25249.6, concerning consumer products exposures, occupational
22 exposures, and environmental exposures, subject to a private action to TJX, TJ MAXX,
23 and to the California Attorney General, County District Attorneys, and City Attorneys for
24 each city containing a population of at least 750,000 people in whose jurisdictions the
25 violations allegedly occurred, concerning the product Coasters.

26 20. Before sending the notice of alleged violation, Plaintiff investigated the consumer
27 products involved, the likelihood that such products would cause users to suffer
28 significant exposures to Lead, and the corporate structure of each of the Defendants.

1 21. Plaintiff's notice of alleged violation included a Certificate of Merit executed by the
2 attorney for the noticing party, CAG. The Certificate of Merit stated that the attorney for
3 Plaintiff who executed the certificate had consulted with at least one person with relevant
4 and appropriate expertise who reviewed data regarding the exposures to Lead,
5 respectively, which are the subject Proposition 65-listed chemicals of this action. Based
6 on that information, the attorney for Plaintiff who executed the Certificate of Merit
7 believed there was a reasonable and meritorious case for this private action. The attorney
8 for Plaintiff attached to the Certificate of Merit served on the Attorney General the
9 confidential factual information sufficient to establish the basis of the Certificate of
10 Merit.

11 22. Plaintiff's notice of alleged violations also included a Certificate of Service and a
12 document entitled "The Safe Drinking Water & Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986
13 (Proposition 65) A Summary." *Health & Safety Code* § 25249.7(d).

14 23. Plaintiff is commencing this action more than sixty (60) days from the dates that Plaintiff
15 gave notice of the alleged violations to TJX, TJ MAXX, and the public prosecutors
16 referenced in Paragraph 19.

17 24. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that neither the Attorney General, nor
18 any applicable district attorney or city attorney has commenced and is diligently
19 prosecuting an action against the Defendants.

20 FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

21 (By CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. and against TJX, TJ MAXX, and DOES 1-
22 20 for Violations of Proposition 65, The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act
23 of 1986 (*Health & Safety Code*, §§ 25249.5, *et seq.*))

24 Coasters

25 25. Plaintiff CONSUMER ADVOCACY GROUP, INC. repeats and incorporates by
26 reference paragraphs 1 through 24 of this complaint as though fully set forth herein.

27 26. Each of the Defendants is, and at all times mentioned herein was, a manufacturer,
28 distributor, promoter, or retailer of Coasters, including but not limited to 2" x 2" Set of

1 Four Photo Coasters #84-7535-222535-001299-10-8, a consumer product designed for
2 use in proximity with drinks.

3 27. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that Coasters contain Lead.

4 28. Defendants knew or should have known that Lead has been identified by the State of
5 California as a chemical known to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity and therefore
6 was subject to Proposition 65 warning requirements. Defendants were also informed of
7 the presence of Lead in the Coasters within Plaintiff's notice of alleged violations further
8 discussed above at Paragraph 19.

9 29. Plaintiff's allegations regarding Coasters concern "[c]onsumer products exposure[s],"
10 which "is an exposure that results from a person's acquisition, purchase, storage,
11 consumption, or other reasonably foreseeable use of a consumer good, or any exposure
12 that results from receiving a consumer service." *Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 25602(b)*.
13 Coasters are a consumer product, and, as mentioned in herein, exposures to Lead took
14 place as a result of such normal and foreseeable consumption and use.

15 30. The principal routes of exposure with regard to Coasters are and were through dermal
16 contact, ingestion, and inhalation. Persons sustain exposures, including but not limited
17 to, handling Coasters without wearing gloves or any other personal protective equipment,
18 or touching bare skin or mucous membranes with gloves after handling Coasters, as well
19 as through hand to mouth contact, hand to mucous membrane, or breathing in particulate
20 matter dispersed from Coasters.

21 31. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each of Defendants' violations of
22 Proposition 65 as to Coasters have been ongoing and continuous to the date of the signing
23 of this complaint, as Defendants engaged and continue to engage in conduct which
24 violates Health and Safety Code section 25249.6, including the manufacture, distribution,
25 promotion, and sale of Coasters, so that a separate and distinct violation of Proposition 65
26 occurred each and every time a person was exposed to Lead by Coasters as mentioned
27 herein.

1 32. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges that each violation of Proposition 65
2 mentioned herein is ever continuing. Plaintiff further alleges and believes that the
3 violations alleged herein will continue to occur into the future.

4 33. Based on the allegations herein, Defendants are liable for civil penalties of up to
5 \$2,500.00 per day per individual exposure to Lead from Coasters, pursuant to Health and
6 Safety Code section 25249.7(b).

7 34. In the absence of equitable relief, the general public and Defendants' employees will
8 continue to be involuntarily exposed to Lead that is contained in Coasters, creating a
9 substantial risk of irreparable harm. Thus, by committing the acts alleged herein,
10 Defendants have caused irreparable harm for which there is no plain, speedy, or adequate
11 remedy at law.

12 35. Plaintiff has engaged in good faith efforts to resolve the claims alleged herein prior to
13 filing this Complaint.

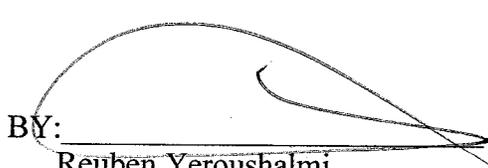
14
15 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

16 Plaintiff demands against each of the Defendants as follows:

- 17 1. A permanent injunction mandating Proposition 65-compliant warnings;
18 2. Penalties pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7, subdivision (b);
19 3. Costs of suit;
20 4. Reasonable attorney fees and costs; and
21 5. Any further relief that the court may deem just and equitable.

22
23 Dated: October 11, 2011

YEROUSHALMI & ASSOCIATES

24
25
26 BY: 

Reuben Yeroushalmi
Attorneys for Plaintiff,
Consumer Advocacy Group, Inc.