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KIM TURNER, Court Executive Officer
MARIN COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT
By [illegible] Deputy

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COUNTY OF MARIN

UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION

DR. WHITNEY R. LEEMAN, Plaintiff. v. ACME UNITED CORPORATION; and DOES 1-150, inclusive, Defendants.	Case No. CIV 1501601 **COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF** (Cal. Health & Safety Code. § 25249.6 *et seq.*)

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by plaintiff, DR. WHITNEY R. LEEMAN, in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California, to enforce the People's right to be informed of the presence of di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate ("DEHP"), a toxic chemical found in vinyl/PVC tape measure hand straps sold in the State of California.

2. By this Complaint, plaintiff seeks to remedy defendants' continuing failure to warn California citizens about reproductive toxicity associated with their exposure to DEHP present in or on vinyl/PVC tape measure hand straps that defendants manufacture, import, distribute, sell and/or offer for sale to consumers throughout the State of California.

3. High levels of DEHP are commonly found in and on vinyl/PVC tape measure hand straps that defendants manufacture, import, distribute, sell and/or offer for sale to consumers throughout the State of California.

4. Under California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 *et seq.* ("Proposition 65"), "[n]o person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the State to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual ..." (Cal. Health & Safety Code, § 25249.6.)

5. On October 24, 2003, California identified and listed DEHP as a chemical known to cause birth defects and other reproductive harm. DEHP became subject to the warning requirement one year later and was therefore subject to the "clear and reasonable warning" requirements of Proposition 65 beginning on October 24, 2004. (*27 CCR § 27001 (c); Cal. Health & Safety Code § 25249.8.*) DEHP is hereinafter referred to as the "LISTED CHEMICAL."

6. Defendants manufacture, import, distribute, sell and/or offer for sale vinyl/PVC tape measure hand straps containing excessive levels of the LISTED CHEMICAL including, but not limited to, the *Westcott 12ft. Tape Measure, Item No. 15651, UPC #0 73577 15651 7.*

All such vinyl/PVC tape measure hand straps containing the LISTED CHEMICAL shall hereinafter be referred to as the "PRODUCTS."

7. Defendants' failure to warn consumers and/or other individuals in the State of California not covered by California's Occupational Safety Health Act, Labor Code § 6300 *et seq.*, about their exposure to the LISTED CHEMICAL and its potential to cause birth defects and other reproductive harm in conjunction with defendants' manufacture, importation, distribution, sale, and/or offering for sale of the PRODUCTS in California is a violation of Proposition 65 and subjects defendants to enjoinment of such conduct as well as civil penalties for each such violation.

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

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

PARTIES

10. Plaintiff, DR. WHITNEY R. LEEMAN, is a citizen of the State of California who is dedicated to protecting the health of California citizens through the elimination or reduction of toxic exposures from consumer products; she brings this action in the public interest pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(d).

11. Defendant ACME UNITED CORPORATION ("ACME UNITED") is a person in the course of doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11(b).

12. ACME UNITED manufactures, imports, distributes, sells and/or offers the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California, or implies by its conduct that it manufactures, imports, distributes, sells and/or offers the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California.

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

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

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

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

17. Defendants DOES 101-150 ("RETAILER DEFENDANTS") are each persons in the course of doing business within the meaning of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.11.

18. RETAILER DEFENDANTS offer the PRODUCTS for sale to individuals in the State of California.

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

20. ACME UNITED, MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS, DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS, and RETAILER DEFENDANTS shall, where appropriate, collectively be referred to as "DEFENDANTS."

VENUE AND JURISDICTION

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

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

23. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over DEFENDANTS based on plaintiff's information and good faith belief that each defendant is a person, firm, corporation, or association that is a citizen of the State of California, has sufficient minimum contacts in the State of California, or otherwise purposefully avails itself of the California market. DEFENDANTS' purposeful availment renders the exercise of personal jurisdiction by California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of Proposition 65 - Against All Defendants)

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

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

26. Proposition 65 states, "[n]o person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause

cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual...." (*Ibid.*)

27. On or about February 26, 2014, a sixty-day notice of violation, together with the requisite certificate of merit required by Health & Safety Code § 25249.7 (d) (1), was served on ACME UNITED and various public enforcement agencies stating that, as a result of the DEFENDANTS' sales of the PRODUCTS, purchasers and users in the State of California were being exposed to the LISTED CHEMICAL resulting from the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS, without the individual purchasers and users first having been provided with a "clear and reasonable warning" regarding such toxic exposures, as required by Proposition 65.

28. DEFENDANTS have engaged in the manufacture, importation, distribution, sale, and/or offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, and DEFENDANTS' manufacture, importation, distribution, sales, and/or offering of the PRODUCTS for sale or use in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 has continued to occur beyond DEFENDANTS' receipt of plaintiff's sixty-day notice of violation. As such, DEFENDANTS' violations are ongoing and continuous in nature, and will continue to occur in the future.

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

30. The PRODUCTS manufactured, imported, distributed, sold, and/or offered for sale or use in California by DEFENDANTS contained the LISTED CHEMICAL in an amount above the allowable State limits.

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

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

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

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

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

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

37. Contrary to the express policy and statutory prohibition of Proposition 65 enacted directly by California voters, individuals exposed to the LISTED CHEMICAL through dermal contact and/or ingestion resulting from the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS sold by DEFENDANTS without a "clear and reasonable warning," have suffered, and continue to suffer, irreparable harm for which they have no plain, speedy, or adequate remedy at law.

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

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

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

Wherefore, plaintiff prays for judgment against DEFENDANTS as follows:

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

2. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a), preliminarily and permanently enjoin DEFENDANTS from manufacturing, importing, distributing, selling, and/or offering the PRODUCTS for sale or use in California, without providing "clear and reasonable warnings" as defined by California Code of Regulations title 27, § 25601 et. seq., as to the harms associated with exposure to the LISTED CHEMICAL;

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

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

Dated: May 1, 2015

THE CHANLER GROUP

By:_____
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DR. WHITNEY R. LEEMAN