

Assigned for all purposes to: Stanley Mosk Courthouse, Judicial Officer: Malcolm Mackey

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8 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
9 FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

10 APS&EE, LLC, a limited liability company,)
11 Plaintiff,)
12 v.)
13 MICHAELS STORES, INC., a corporation,)
14 MICHAELS STORES PROCUREMENT)
15 COMPANY, INC., a corporation, and DOES 1)
16 through 100, inclusive,)
17 Defendants.)

CASE NO. 21STCV11856
**PLAINTIFF'S COMPLAINT FOR
CIVIL PENALTIES AND INJUNCTIVE
RELIEF**
(Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 et seq.)
Judge:
Dept.:
Compl. Filed:

Unlimited Jurisdiction

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INTRODUCTION

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2 1. This Complaint is brought by Plaintiff, APS&EE, LLC (“Plaintiff”) in the public
3 interest of the citizens of the State of California, a representative action to enforce the People’s
4 right to be informed of the presence of lead (“Lead”), a chemical known to the State of
5 California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm, found in Ashland Cookie
6 Jars, including green truck with orange pumpkins, #629504; 83659-2020-04, 1-91518-20956-3,
7 sold by Defendants.

8 2. The purpose of this Complaint is to remedy Defendants’ continuing failure to
9 warn California residents about the risk of exposure to the Lead in the Ashland Cookie Jars
10 manufactured, distributed, sold, and/or offered for sale to consumers in California.

11 3. Defendants have and continue to manufacture, distribute, sell, and/or offer to sell
12 the Ashland Cookie Jars, including green truck with orange pumpkins, #629504; 83659-2020-04,
13 1-91518-20956-32. The products described in this paragraph shall hereinafter be referred to as
14 the “Products”.

15 4. Children and adults are exposed to the Lead when they use, touch, handle, play
16 with, repair, maintain, install, eat and/or drink from, the Products.

17 5. Hazardous levels of the Lead are found in the accessible surface areas of the
18 Products manufactured, distributed, sold, and/or offered for sale by Defendants to consumers in
19 California.

20 6. California Health and Safety Code section 25249.6 et seq. (“Proposition 65”)
21 provides in pertinent part: “[n]o person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and
22 intentionally expose any individual to a chemical known to the state to cause cancer or
23 reproductive toxicity without first giving clear and reasonable warning to such individual...”

24 7. Studies repeatedly conclude that exposure to the Lead is hazardous to the health
25 of children and adults. Children are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of Lead.
26 Accordingly, California has listed the Lead as a chemical known to the state to cause cancer and
27 birth defects or other reproductive harm, and therefore subject to Proposition 65 warning
28 requirements.

1 injunctive relief.

2 15. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants because each is a person, firm,
3 corporation, or association with sufficient minimum contacts in the State of California, or
4 otherwise purposefully avails itself to the California market as to render jurisdiction by the
5 California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.

6 16. Venue is proper in Los Angeles County Superior Court because one or more
7 occurrences of the wrongful conduct occurred, and continues to occur, in Los Angeles County,
8 and/or because Defendants conducted, and continue to conduct, business in this County with
9 respect to the Products.

10 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

11 **(Violations of Health & Safety Code Section 25249.6 et seq.)**

12 17. Plaintiff re-alleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth herein,
13 Paragraphs 1 through 16, inclusive.

14 18. On September 23, 2020, a sixty-day notice of violation (the “Notice”), along with
15 a Certificate of Merit, was provided to MICHAELS STORES, INC., MICHAELS STORES
16 PROCUREMENT COMPANY, INC., and the various public enforcement agencies with respect
17 to the Proposition 65 violations related to Lead in the Products. In addition, on said date, in
18 compliance with Health & Safety Code section 25249.7(d), confidential factual information
19 sufficient to establish the basis for the Certificate of Merit was provided to the California
20 Attorney General.

21 19. None of the public prosecutors with the authority to prosecute Proposition 65
22 violations has commenced and/or is diligently prosecuting the causes of action against
23 Defendants based on the claims asserted in Plaintiff’s Notice.

24 20. By placing the Products into the stream of commerce, each Defendant is a person
25 in the course of doing business within the meaning of Health & Safety Code section 25249.11.

26 21. Defendants knew and intended that consumers, including children, will use,
27 touch, handle, play with, repair, maintain, install, eat and/or drink from, the Products.

28 22. Defendants knew that the Products contain Lead. Defendants, who are in the

1 business of marketing home goods such as ceramicware, also should have known or have
2 constructive knowledge that the Products contain Lead from widespread media coverage and/or
3 other channels of information concerning the presence of Lead in ceramicware.

4 23. Lead is a chemical listed by the State of California as known to cause cancer and
5 birth defects or other reproductive harm.

6 24. Defendants' Products contain sufficient quantities of the Lead such that
7 consumers, including children, who use, touch, handle, play with, repair, maintain, install, eat
8 and/or drink from the Products are exposed to unsafe levels of Lead. Lead is present in the
9 Products in such a way as to expose individuals to Lead, as exposure is defined by 27 CCR
10 section 25600.1(e): "...that results from a person's acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption,
11 or any reasonably foreseeable use..." Direct and indirect exposure occurs through inhalation,
12 ingestion and/or dermal contact during the reasonably foreseeable use of the Products.

13 25. Defendants knew or should have known that the reasonably foreseeable use of the
14 Products exposes individuals to Lead through inhalation, ingestion and/or dermal contact.

15 26. Defendants failed to provide a "clear and reasonable warning" to individuals in
16 the State of California who were or could become exposed to Lead during the reasonably
17 foreseeable use of the Products.

18 27. By committing the acts alleged in this Complaint, Defendants have violated
19 California Health & Safety Code section 25249.6 et seq. by knowingly and intentionally
20 exposing individuals to Lead without first giving clear and reasonable warnings to such
21 individuals regarding the toxicity of Lead.

22 28. As a result of Defendants' wrongful conduct, individuals in the State of California
23 have been exposed to Lead through the inhalation, ingestion and/or dermal contact during the
24 reasonably foreseeable use of the Products without a "clear and reasonable warning", and have
25 suffered and continue to suffer harm, each and every day since at least September 23, 2017.

26 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

27 **WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendants as follows:

28 1. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code section 25249.7(b),

1 assess civil penalties against Defendants in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation
2 alleged herein;

3 2. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code section 25249.7(a),
4 preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendants from manufacturing, distributing, or offering
5 the Products for sale in California without providing “clear and reasonable warnings” as defined
6 by 27 CCR section 25601;


7 3. That the Court, pursuant to California Health & Safety Code section 25249.7(a),
8 order Defendants to take action to stop ongoing unwarned exposures to Lead resulting from use
9 of Products sold by Defendants;

10 4. That the Court, pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure section 1021.5, or
11 any other applicable theory, grant Plaintiff’s reasonable attorneys’ fees and costs of suit; and

12 5. Such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

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14 Dated: March 26, 2021

LAW OFFICES OF LUCAS T. NOVAK

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16 By: 
17 LUCAS T. NOVAK
Attorney for Plaintiff, APS&EE, LLC