

1 Laralei S. Paras, State Bar No. 203319  
2 Rebecca M. Jackson, State Bar No. 221583  
3 Seven Hills LLP  
4 4 Embarcadero Center, Suite 1400  
5 San Francisco, CA 94111  
6 Telephone: (415) 926-7247  
7 laralei@sevenhillslp.com  
8 rebecca@sevenhillslp.com

**ELECTRONICALLY  
FILED**

*Superior Court of California,  
County of San Francisco*

**05/11/2023  
Clerk of the Court**

**BY: JEFFREY FLORES  
Deputy Clerk**

6 Attorneys for Plaintiff  
7 KEEP AMERICA SAFE AND BEAUTIFUL

8 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

9 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

10 UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION

11  
12 KEEP AMERICA SAFE AND BEAUTIFUL,

13 Plaintiff,

14 v.

15 CORTINA TOOL & MOLDING CO. D.B.A.  
16 CORTINA SAFETY PRODUCTS GROUP;  
17 and DOES 1-30, inclusive,

18 Defendants.

Case No.

**CGC-23-606476**

**COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES  
AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

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

UNLIMITED CIVIL

1 Plaintiff KEEP AMERICA SAFE AND BEAUTIFUL, acting in the public interest, alleges a  
2 cause of action against Defendants CORTINA TOOL & MOLDING CO. D.B.A. CORTINA  
3 SAFETY PRODUCTS GROUP and DOES 1-30.

4 **INTRODUCTION AND NATURE OF THE ACTION**

5 1. This Complaint is a representative action brought by plaintiff Keep America Safe and  
6 Beautiful (“**KASB**”) in the public interest of the citizens of the State of California to enforce the  
7 People’s right to be informed of the health hazards caused by exposures to di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate  
8 (“**DEHP**”), a toxic chemical found in and on the vinyl flags manufactured, imported, distributed, sold  
9 or offered for sale by Defendants in the State of California.

10 2. By this Complaint, plaintiff seeks to remedy Defendants’ continuing failure to warn  
11 individuals not covered by California’s Occupational Safety Health Act, Labor Code § 6300 *et seq.*  
12 (“**consumers**”) they are being exposed to substances known to the State of California to cause birth  
13 defects or other reproductive harm through exposures to DEHP, when they purchase, use or handle  
14 Defendants’ vinyl flags.

15 3. Detectable levels of DEHP are found in and on the vinyl flags that Defendants  
16 manufacture, import, sell or distribute for sale to individuals throughout California.

17 4. Pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified at  
18 Health and Safety Code § 25249.6 *et seq.* (“**Proposition 65**”), it is unlawful for a person in the course  
19 of doing business to knowingly and intentionally expose consumers in California to chemicals known  
20 to the State to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm, without first providing a “clear  
21 and reasonable” health hazard warning to such individuals prior to purchase or use.

22 5. KASB contends and alleges Defendants manufacture, distribute, import, sell, and offer  
23 for sale, in and into California vinyl flags (“**PRODUCTS**”) containing DEHP, without Proposition  
24 65’s requisite health hazard warning regarding the harms associated with exposures to the chemical,  
25 including, but not limited to, (a) *Vinyl Handheld Warning Flag, 18” x 18” Red on Orange, Model*  
26 *No. 03-229-3417, ASIN B00AZ9PYR0*, and (b) *Cortina 24” x 24” Hi-Viz Orange Reinforced Vinyl*  
27 *Heavy Duty Warning Flag With 36” Wood Dowel, Model No. 03-229-3418*. Defendants’ conduct  
28

1 subjects them to civil penalties for each violation, enjoinder as well as preliminary and permanent  
2 injunctive relief. Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(a) and (b).

3 **PARTIES**

4 6. Plaintiff KASB is a non-profit corporation organized under the laws of California and  
5 acting in the interest of the general public, dedicated to protecting the health of California citizens and  
6 the environment through the elimination or reduction of toxic chemicals utilized in manufacturing  
7 consumer products and to increasing public awareness of those chemicals through the promotion of  
8 sound environmental practices and corporate responsibility. KASB is a person within the meaning of  
9 Health & Safety Code § 25249.11(a), and it brings this action in the public interest, pursuant to  
10 Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(d).

11 7. Plaintiff is informed, believes, and thereon alleges, at all relevant times, Defendant  
12 CORTINA TOOL & MOLDING CO. D.B.A. CORTINA SAFETY PRODUCTS GROUP  
13 (“**CORTINA**”) was and is a “person” “in the course of doing business” with ten (10) or more  
14 employees, within the meanings of Health and Safety Code §§ 25249.6 and 25249.11.

15 8. CORTINA manufactures, imports, distributes, sells, and/or offers the PRODUCTS for  
16 sale or use in the State of California, or implies by its conduct that it manufactures, imports,  
17 distributes, sells, and/or offers the PRODUCTS for sale or use in the State of California.

18 9. Defendants DOES 1-10 (“**MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS**”) are each a person  
19 in the course of doing business within the meaning of Health and Safety Code §§ 25249.6 and  
20 25249.11. MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS, and each of them, assemble, fabricate, and  
21 manufacture, or each implies by its conduct that it does such for one or more of the PRODUCTS  
22 offered for sale or use in California.

23 10. Defendants DOES 11-20 (“**DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS**”) are each a person in  
24 the course of doing business within the meaning of Health and Safety Code §§ 25249.6 and 25249.11.  
25 DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS, and each of them, distribute, transfer, and transport, or each  
26 impliedly does so by its conduct, one or more of the PRODUCTS to individuals, businesses, or  
27 retailers for sale or use in the State of California.

28 ///

1 11. Defendants DOES 21-30 (“**RETAILER DEFENDANTS**”) are each a person in the  
2 course of doing business within the meaning of Health and Safety Code §§ 25249.6 and 25249.11.  
3 **RETAILER DEFENDANTS**, and each of them, by and through their conduct, offer the **PRODUCTS**  
4 for sale to individuals in the State of California.

5 12. At this time, the true names of Defendants DOES 1 through 30, inclusive, are  
6 unknown to plaintiff, who, therefore, sues said DOES Defendants by their fictitious names, pursuant  
7 to Code of Civil Procedure § 474. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, each  
8 of the fictitiously named Defendants is responsible in some manner for the acts and occurrences  
9 alleged herein and the damages caused thereby. When ascertained, their true names and capacities  
10 shall be reflected in an amended complaint.

11 13. At all times mentioned herein, **CORTINA, MANUFACTURER DEFENDANTS,**  
12 **DISTRIBUTOR DEFENDANTS,** and **RETAILER DEFENDANTS** shall, hereinafter, where  
13 appropriate, be referred to collectively as the “**DEFENDANTS.**”

#### 14 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

15 14. This Court has jurisdiction over this action, pursuant to Cal. Health & Safety Code  
16 § 25249.7, allowing enforcement by any court of competent jurisdiction. The California Superior  
17 Court has jurisdiction over this action, pursuant to California Constitution Article VI, section 10,  
18 which grants the Superior Court “original jurisdiction in all causes except those given by statute to  
19 other trial courts.” The statute under which this action is brought does not specify any other basis of  
20 subject matter jurisdiction.

21 15. The California Superior Court has jurisdiction over **DEFENDANTS**, based on  
22 plaintiff’s information and good faith belief **DEFENDANTS** are each a person, firm, corporation or  
23 association that is a citizen of the State of California, does sufficient business in California, has  
24 sufficient minimum contacts in California, and/or otherwise purposefully and intentionally avail  
25 themselves of the California market through their manufacture, importation, distribution, promotion,  
26 marketing or sale of **PRODUCTS** within the State. **DEFENDANTS’** purposeful availment renders  
27 the exercise of personal jurisdiction by California courts consistent with traditional notions of fair  
28 play and substantial justice.

1 16. Venue is proper in the Superior Court for the County of San Francisco, pursuant to  
 2 Code of Civil Procedure §§ 393, 395, and 395.5, because this Court is a court of competent  
 3 jurisdiction, because plaintiff seeks civil penalties against DEFENDANTS, because one or more  
 4 instances of wrongful conduct occurred, and continue to occur, in this county, and/or because  
 5 DEFENDANTS conducted, and continue to conduct, business in the County of San Francisco with  
 6 respect to the PRODUCTS that are the subject of this action.

### 7 REGULATORY BACKGROUND AND LAW

8 17. In 1986, the people of the State of California approved an initiative addressing the  
 9 harms caused by hazardous chemicals and declared their right “[t]o be informed about exposures to  
 10 chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, or other reproductive harm.” Ballot Pamp., Proposed  
 11 General Law, Gen. Elec. (Nov. 4, 1986) at p.3.

12 18. Formally known as the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 and  
 13 codified at Health & Safety Code § 25249.6 *et seq.*, Proposition 65 states, in relevant part, “[n]o  
 14 person in the course of doing business shall knowingly and intentionally expose any individual to a  
 15 chemical known to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity without first giving a clear and reasonable  
 16 warning to such individual...”

17 19. Under the Act, a “person in the course of doing business” is defined as a business with  
 18 ten (10) or more employees. Health & Safety Code § 25249.11(b). Businesses are prohibited from  
 19 exposing individuals to hazardous chemicals without first giving a “clear and reasonable” warning.  
 20 Health & Safety Code § 25249.6.

21 20. Exposing individuals to hazardous chemicals means to cause individuals to ingest,  
 22 inhale, contact via body surfaces or otherwise come into contact with a listed chemical. 27 CCR  
 23 § 25102(i). An exposure to a hazardous chemical is defined as one that “results from a person’s  
 24 acquisition, purchase, storage, consumption or other reasonably foreseeable use of a product...”  
 25 27 C.C.R. § 25600(h).

26 21. Under Proposition 65, persons violating the statute may be enjoined in any court of  
 27 competent jurisdiction and may be subject to civil penalties of up to \$2,500 per day, per violation.  
 28 Health & Safety Code § 25249.7.

1 22. On October 24, 2003, pursuant to Proposition 65's implementing regulations,  
2 California identified and listed DEHP as a chemical known to the State cause birth defects and  
3 reproductive harm. DEHP became subject to the "clear and reasonable warning" requirements one  
4 year later, on October 24, 2004. Cal. Code Regs. tit. 27, § 27001(c); Health & Safety Code  
5 §§ 25249.8, 25249.10(b).

6 **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

7 23. Plaintiff purchased DEFENDANTS' PRODUCTS, without a warning, in California.

8 24. Plaintiff investigated and tested DEFENDANTS' PRODUCTS at an accredited lab,  
9 and consulted with a person with relevant and appropriate knowledge and expertise, who, after  
10 reviewing the collected data and analyzing the risk of exposure to DEHP, determined the  
11 PRODUCTS subject consumers in California to exposure to the listed chemical at levels requiring a  
12 warning under the statute, based on touching, handling or otherwise utilizing PRODUCTS in  
13 accordance with their reasonably foreseeable and intended usages.

14 25. Based on the foregoing, Plaintiff's attorney executed a certificate of merit, attesting  
15 there was a reasonable and meritorious case for this private action and included the factual  
16 information supporting the certificate when it served the notice on the California Attorney General's  
17 Office, as required. Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(d); Title 11 C.C.R. § 3102.

18 26. Thereafter, on March 12, 2021, plaintiff served a 60-Day Notice of Violation  
19 ("**Notice**"), together with the certificate of merit, on CORTINA, the California Attorney General's  
20 Office, and the requisite public enforcement agencies, alleging, as a result of DEFENDANTS' sales  
21 of the PRODUCTS, consumers in the State of California were, and are, being exposed to DEHP  
22 through their reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS as intended without first receiving a  
23 "clear and reasonable warning," as required by Proposition 65.

24 27. On September 13, 2022, plaintiff served the same parties and entities with a  
25 Supplemental 60-Day Notice of Violation ("**Supplemental Notice**"), together with the certificate of  
26 merit, alleging as a result of DEFENDANTS' sales of the PRODUCTS, consumers in the State of  
27 California were, and are, being exposed to DEHP through their reasonably foreseeable use of the  
28 PRODUCTS as intended without first receiving a "clear and reasonable warning" as required by

1 Proposition 65. The Notice and Supplemental Notice are referred to hereinafter collectively as the  
2 “Notices.”

3 28. After receiving plaintiff’s Notices, no public enforcement agency has commenced and  
4 is diligently prosecuting a cause of action against DEFENDANTS under Proposition 65 to enforce  
5 the alleged violations that are the subject of the Notices.

6 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

7 **(Violation of Proposition 65 - Against All DEFENDANTS)**

8 29. KASB realleges and incorporates by reference, as if fully stated herein, the allegations  
9 set forth in Paragraphs 1 through 28, inclusive.

10 30. DEFENDANTS’ PRODUCTS contain DEHP in levels requiring a clear and  
11 reasonable warning under Proposition 65.

12 31. DEFENDANTS know or should have known the PRODUCTS they manufacture,  
13 import, distribute, sell, and offer for sale in California contain DEHP. As a result of plaintiff’s  
14 Notices, DEFENDANTS also have actual knowledge of the presence of DEHP in the PRODUCTS.

15 32. The PRODUCTS DEFENDANTS manufacture, import, distribute, sell, and offer for  
16 sale in or into the State of California cause exposures to DEHP, both direct and/or indirect dermal  
17 contact and ingestion, through the reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS.

18 33. The normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS has caused, and  
19 continues to cause, exposures to DEHP.

20 34. DEFENDANTS know the normal and reasonably foreseeable use of the PRODUCTS  
21 exposes individuals to DEHP through direct and indirect dermal contact and/or ingestion.

22 35. DEFENDANTS intend that exposures to DEHP from the reasonably foreseeable use  
23 of the PRODUCTS will occur by their deliberate, non-accidental participation in the California  
24 marketplace.

25 36. The exposures to DEHP, caused by DEFENDANTS and endured by consumers and  
26 other individuals in California, are not exempt from the “clear and reasonable” warning requirements  
27 of Proposition 65.

28 ///

1           37.     DEFENDANTS failed to provide a “clear and reasonable warning” to those consumers  
2 and other individuals in California who have been, or who will be, exposed to DEHP through direct  
3 and indirect dermal contact and/or ingestion resulting from the use of the PRODUCTS as intended.

4           38.     Contrary to the express policy and statutory prohibition of Proposition 65, consumers  
5 and other individuals, exposed to DEHP through dermal contact and ingestion as a result of their use  
6 of the PRODUCTS that DEFENDANTS sold without a “clear and reasonable” health hazard  
7 warning, have suffered, and continue to suffer, irreparable harm for which they have no plain, speedy,  
8 or adequate remedy at law.

9           39.     DEFENDANTS manufacture, import, distribute, sell, and offer the PRODUCTS for  
10 sale or use in violation of Health and Safety Code § 25249.6, and DEFENDANTS’ violations have  
11 continued beyond their receipt of plaintiff’s Notices. As such, DEFENDANTS’ violations are  
12 ongoing and continuous in nature and, unless enjoined, will continue in the future.

13          40.     Pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(b), as a consequence of the above-  
14 described acts, DEFENDANTS, and each of them, are liable for a maximum civil penalty of \$2,500  
15 per day for each violation.

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

18   **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

19          Wherefore, KASB prays for relief and judgment against DEFENDANTS, and each of them,  
20 as follows:

21           1.     That the Court, pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(a), preliminarily and  
22 permanently enjoin DEFENDANTS from manufacturing, distributing, importing, marketing or  
23 otherwise offering the PRODUCTS for sale or use in California without first providing a “clear and  
24 reasonable warning” to consumers addressing the harms associated with exposures to DEHP;

25           2.     That the Court, pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25249.7(a), issue preliminary  
26 and permanent injunctions mandating DEFENDANTS recall all PRODUCTS currently in the chain  
27 of commerce in California that do not bear a clear and reasonable health hazard warning;

28     ///



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

3. That the Court assess civil penalties against DEFENDANTS, and each of them, in the amount of \$2,500 per day for each violation of Proposition 65, in an amount to be determined at trial;


4. That the Court award plaintiff its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit, incurred herein; and

5. That the Court grant any further relief as it deems just and equitable.

Dated: May 11, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

SEVEN HILLS LLP

By:  \_\_\_\_\_

Laralei Paras  
Attorneys for Plaintiff  
*Keep America Safe and Beautiful*