

## SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1 The Parties.** This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Ema Bell (“Bell”) and Tatco Products, Inc. (“Tatco Products”). Together, Bell and Tatco Products are collectively referred to as the “Parties.” Bell is an individual who resides in the State of California, and seeks to promote awareness of exposures to toxic chemicals and to improve human health by reducing or eliminating hazardous substances contained in consumer products. Bell alleges that Tatco Products is a person in the course of doing business for purposes of the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq. (“Proposition 65”).

**1.2 General Allegations.** Bell alleges that Tatco Products has exposed individuals to the chemical di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) from its import, distribution and/or sales of backpacks/bags in the state of California without first providing users and consumers of the product with a clear and reasonable health hazard exposure warning as required pursuant to Proposition 65. DEHP is listed pursuant to Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer and reproductive toxicity.

**1.3 Product Description.** The products covered by this Settlement Agreement are Tatco backpacks/bags (the “Products”) that have been imported, distributed, offered for sale and/or sold in California by Tatco Products.

**1.4 Notice of Violation.** On or about August 31, 2020, Bell served Tatco Products, Office Depot, LLC, Office Depot, Inc. (collectively, “Office Depot”), and various public enforcement agencies with a document entitled “Notice of Violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, et seq.” (the “Notice”). The Notice provided Tatco Products and such others, including public enforcers, with notice that alleged that Tatco Products was in violation of California Health & Safety Code § 25249.6, for failing to warn California consumers and customers that use of the Products will expose them to DEHP. To the best of the Parties’ knowledge, no public enforcer has diligently prosecuted the allegations set forth in the Notice.

**1.5 No Admission.** Tatco Products denies the material factual and legal allegations contained in the Notice and maintains that, to the best of its knowledge, all products that are or have been imported, sold and/or distributed in California, including the Products, have been and are in compliance with all laws. Nothing in this Settlement Agreement shall be construed as an admission by Tatco Products of any fact, finding, issue of law, or violation of law; nor shall compliance with this Settlement Agreement constitute or be construed as an admission by Tatco Products of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Tatco Products. However, this § 1.5 shall not diminish or otherwise affect the obligations, responsibilities and duties under this Settlement Agreement. Notwithstanding the allegations in the Notice, Tatco Products maintains that it has not knowingly distributed, imported, or manufactured, or caused to be distributed, imported or manufactured, the Products for sale in California in violation of Proposition 65.

**1.6 Effective Date.** For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, the term “Effective Date” shall mean the date this Agreement is last executed by the Parties.


## **2. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF: WARNINGS**

**2.1 Reformulation of Products.** Commencing ninety (90) days after the Effective Date, and continuing thereafter, Products that Tatco Products directly manufactures, imports, distributes, sells, or offers for sale in California shall either: (a) be Reformulated Products pursuant to § 2.2, below; or (b) be labeled with a clear and reasonable exposure warning pursuant to §§ 2.3 and 2.4, below. For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, a “Reformulated Product” is a Product that is in compliance with the standard set forth in § 2.2, below. The warning requirement set forth in §§ 2.3 and 2.4 shall not apply to any Reformulated Product.


**2.2 Reformulation Standard.** “Reformulated Products” shall mean Products that contain concentrations less than or equal to 0.1% (1,000 parts per million (ppm)) of DEHP when analyzed pursuant to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency testing methodologies 3580A and 8270C or other methodology utilized by federal or state government agencies for the purpose of determining the phthalate content in a solid substance.

**2.3 Clear and Reasonable Warning.** Commencing ninety (90) days after the Effective Date, and continuing thereafter, a clear and reasonable exposure warning as set forth in this §§ 2.3 and 2.4 must be provided for all Products that Tatco Products manufacturers, imports, distributes, sells, or offers for sale in California that is not a Reformulated Product. There shall be no obligation for Tatco Products to provide an exposure warning for Products that entered the stream of commerce prior to and within ninety (90) days after the Effective Date. The warning shall consist of either the **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** described in §§ 2.3(a) or (b), respectively:

(a) **Warning.** The “Warning” shall consist of the statement:

 **WARNING:** This product can expose you to chemicals including di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), which are known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. For more information go to [www.P65Warnings.ca.gov](http://www.P65Warnings.ca.gov).

(b) **Alternative Warning:** Tatco Products may, but is not required to, use the alternative short-form warning as set forth in this § 2.3(b) (“**Alternative Warning**”) as follows:

 **WARNING:** Cancer and Reproductive Harm - [www.P65Warnings.ca.gov](http://www.P65Warnings.ca.gov).

**2.4** A **Warning** or **Alternative Warning** provided pursuant to § 2.3 must print the word “**WARNING:**” in all capital letters and in bold font, followed by a colon. The warning symbol to the left of the word “**WARNING:**” must be a black exclamation point in a yellow equilateral triangle with a black outline, except that if the sign or label for the Products does not use the color yellow, the symbol may be in black and white. The symbol must be in a size no smaller than the height of the word “**WARNING:**”. The warning shall be affixed to or printed on the Products’ packaging or labeling, or on a placard, shelf tag, sign or electronic device or automatic process, providing that the warning is displayed with such conspicuousness, as compared with other words, statements, or designs as to render it likely to be read and understood by an ordinary individual under customary conditions of purchase or use. The warning may be contained in the same section of the packaging, labeling, or instruction booklet that states other safety warnings, if any, concerning the use of the Product and shall be at least the same size as those other safety warnings.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the interest of diligence, Tatco Products commenced providing exposure warnings prior to finalizing the terms of this Settlement Agreement; the warning used by Tatco Products is the Alternative Warning set out in § 2.3(b) with the

If Tatco Products directly sells Products via its own internet website to customers located in California, the foregoing warning shall be provided by including either the warning or a clearly marked hyperlink using the word "WARNING" on the product display page, or by otherwise prominently displaying the warning to the purchaser prior to completing the purchase.

**2.5 Compliance with Warning Regulations.** The Parties agree that Tatco Products shall be deemed to be in compliance with this Settlement Agreement by either adhering to §§ 2.3 and 2.4 of this Settlement Agreement or by complying with warning requirements adopted by the State of California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment ("OEHHA") as of or after the Effective Date.

**3. PENALTIES PURSUANT TO HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 25249.7(b)**

In settlement of all the claims referred to in this Settlement Agreement, Tatco Products shall pay \$500.00 as a Civil Penalty in accordance with this Section. The Civil Penalty payment shall be allocated in accordance with California Health & Safety Code §§ 25249.12(c)(1) and (d), with 75% of the Penalty remitted to OEHHA and the remaining 25% of the Penalty remitted to Bell. The Civil Penalty payment(s) shall be delivered to the addresses identified in § 3.2, below. For all amounts due and owing that are not received within the payment times set forth below, Tatco Products shall pay a late civil penalty payment fee equal to \$100/day to be allocated in accordance with California Health & Safety Code § 25249.12(c)(1) and (d).

**3.1 Civil Penalty.** Within ten (10) days of the Effective Date, Tatco Products shall issue two separate checks for the Civil Penalty payment to (a) "OEHHA" in the amount of \$375.00; and to (b) "Brodsky & Smith, LLC in Trust for Bell" in the amount of \$125.00. The Civil Penalty payment(s) shall be delivered to the addresses identified in § 3.2, below.

**3.2 Payment Procedures.**

**(a) Issuance of Payments.** Payments shall be delivered as follows:

(i) All payments owed to Bell, pursuant to § 3.1 shall be delivered to the following payment address:

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additional identification of a chemical, and those warnings shall be deemed to be in compliance with Proposition 65 and this Settlement Agreement.

Evan J. Smith, Esquire  
Brodsky & Smith, LLC  
Two Bala Plaza, Suite 805  
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

(ii) All payments owed to OEHHA (EIN: 68-0284486), pursuant to § 3.1 shall be delivered directly to OEHHA (Memo Line "Prop 65 Penalties") at the following addresses:

For United States Postal Service Delivery:

Mike Gyurics  
Fiscal Operations Branch Chief  
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment  
P.O. Box 4010  
Sacramento, CA 95812-4010

For Non-United States Postal Service Delivery:

Mike Gyurics  
Fiscal Operations Branch Chief  
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**(b) Copy of Payments to OEHHA.** Tatco Products agrees to provide Bell's counsel with a copy of the checks payable to OEHHA, simultaneous with its penalty payments to Bell, to be delivered to the address provided in § 3.2(a)(i), as proof of payment to OEHHA.

**(c) Tax Documentation.** Tatco Products agrees to provide a completed IRS 1099 for its payments to, and Bell agrees to provide IRS W-9 forms for, each of the following payees under this Settlement Agreement:

(i) "Ema Bell" whose address and tax identification number shall be provided within five (5) days after this Settlement Agreement is fully executed by the Parties;

(ii) "Brodsky & Smith, LLC" (EIN: 23-2971061) at the address provided in Section 3.2(a)(i); and

(iii) "Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment" 1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

4. **REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES AND COSTS**

The Parties acknowledge that Bell and her counsel offered to reach preliminary agreement on the material terms of this dispute before reaching terms on the amount of fees and costs to be reimbursed to them. The Parties thereafter reached an accord on the compensation due to Bell and her counsel under general contract principles and the private attorney general doctrine and principles codified at California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5, for all work performed through the mutual execution of this agreement. Under these legal principles, Tatco Products shall reimburse Bell's counsel for fees and costs incurred as a result of investigating and bringing this matter to Tatco Products' attention, and negotiating a settlement in the public interest. Within ten (10) days of the Effective Date, Tatco Products shall issue a check payable to "Brodsky & Smith, LLC" in the amount of \$4,500.00 for delivery to the address identified in § 3.2(a)(i), above.

5. **RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS**

**5.1 Release of Tatco Products and Downstream Customers and Entities.** This Settlement Agreement is a full, final and binding resolution between Bell, acting on her own behalf, and Tatco Products, of any violation of Proposition 65 that was or could have been asserted by Bell or on behalf of her past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assigns ("Releasers") for failure to provide warnings for alleged exposures to DEHP contained in the Products, and Releasers hereby release any such claims against Tatco Products and its parents, subsidiaries, affiliated entities, shareholders, marketplace hosts, directors, officers, agents, employees, attorneys, successors and assignees, and each entity to whom Tatco Products directly or indirectly distributes or sells the Products, including but not limited to, downstream distributors, wholesalers, customers, retailers, including but not limited to Office Depot, and its respective subsidiaries, affiliates and parents, franchisees, cooperative members and licensees (collectively, the "Releasees"), from all alleged claims for violations of Proposition 65 through the Effective Date for the Products.

In further consideration of the promises and agreements herein contained, and for the payments to be made pursuant to §§ 3 and 4 above, Bell, on behalf of herself and Releasers, hereby covenants not to sue and waives any right to institute, participate in, directly or indirectly, any form of legal

action and releases all claims that they may have, including without limitation, all actions and causes of action in law and in equity, all obligations, expenses (including without limitation all attorneys' fees, expert fees, and investigation fees, and costs), damages, losses, liabilities and demands against any of the Releasees of any nature, character, or kind, whether known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected, limited to and arising out of the alleged or actual exposure to the chemical DEHP in the Products.

**5.2 Tatco Products' Release of Bell.** Tatco Products, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors and/or assignees, hereby waives any and all claims against Bell, her attorneys and other representatives, for any and all actions taken or statements made (or those that could have been taken or made) by Bell and/or her attorneys and other representatives in the course of investigating claims in this matter or otherwise seeking to enforce Proposition 65 against it in this matter.

**5.3 California Civil Code § 1542.** It is possible that other claims not known to the Parties arising out of the facts alleged in the Notice and relating to the Products will develop or be discovered. Bell on behalf of herself only, on one hand, and Tatco Products, on the other hand, acknowledge that this Agreement is expressly intended to cover and include all such claims up through the Effective Date, including all rights of action therefor. The Parties acknowledge that the claims released in §§ 5.1 and 5.2, above, may include unknown claims, and nevertheless waive California Civil Code § 1542 as to any such unknown claims. California Civil Code § 1542 reads as follows:

A GENERAL RELEASE DOES NOT EXTEND TO CLAIMS THAT THE CREDITOR OR RELEASING PARTY DOES NOT KNOW OR SUSPECT TO EXIST IN HIS OR HER FAVOR AT THE TIME OF EXECUTING THE RELEASE AND THAT, IF KNOWN BY HIM OR HER, WOULD HAVE MATERIALLY AFFECTED HIS OR HER SETTLEMENT WITH THE DEBTOR OR RELEASED PARTY.

Bell and Tatco Products each acknowledge and understand the significance and consequence of this specific waiver of California Civil Code § 1542.

**5.4 Deemed Compliance with Proposition 65.** The Parties agree that compliance by Tatco Products with this Settlement Agreement constitutes compliance with Proposition 65 with respect to exposure to DEHP from use of the Products.

**6. SEVERABILITY**

If, subsequent to the execution of this Settlement Agreement, any of the provisions of this Settlement Agreement are deemed by a court to be unenforceable, the validity of the enforceable provisions remaining shall not be adversely affected but only to the extent the deletion of the provision deemed unenforceable does not materially affect, or otherwise result in the effect of the Settlement Agreement being contrary to the intent of the Parties in entering into this Settlement Agreement.

**7. GOVERNING LAW**

The terms of this Settlement Agreement shall be governed by the law of the State of California and apply within the State of California. In the event that Proposition 65 is repealed or is otherwise rendered inapplicable or limited by reason of law generally, or as to the Products, Tatco Products shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement with respect to, and to the extent that, a Product is so affected.

**8. NOTICES**

Unless specified herein, all correspondence and notices required to be provided pursuant to this Settlement Agreement shall be in writing and personally delivered or sent by: (i) first-class (registered or certified mail) return receipt requested; or (ii) overnight or two-day courier on any party by the other party to the following addresses:

For Tatco Products:

Jeff Dworetz  
Tatco  
6750-B Jones Mill Court  
Peachtree Corners, GA 30092

With copy to:

Jennifer K. Singh  
Grimaldi Law Offices



75 Broadway Street, Suite 202  
San Francisco, CA 94111

For Bell:

Evan J. Smith  
Brodsky & Smith, LLC  
Two Bala Plaza, Suite 805  
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

Either party, from time to time, may specify in writing to the other party a change of address to which all notices and other communications shall be sent.

9. **COUNTERPARTS: SIGNATURES**

This Settlement Agreement may be executed in counterparts and by facsimile or .pdf signature, each of which shall be deemed an original, and all of which, when taken together, shall constitute one and the same document.

10. **COMPLIANCE WITH HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 25249.7(f)**

Bell agrees to comply with the reporting requirements referenced in Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(f).

11. **MODIFICATION**

This Settlement Agreement may be modified only by a written agreement of the Parties.

12. **ENTIRE AGREEMENT**

This Settlement Agreement contains the sole and entire agreement of the Parties and any and all prior negotiations and understandings related hereto shall be deemed to have been merged within it. No representations or terms of agreement other than those contained herein exist or have been made by any Party with respect to the other Party or the subject matter hereof.

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13. **AUTHORIZATION**

The undersigned are authorized to execute this Settlement Agreement and have read, understood and agree to all of the terms and conditions contained in this Settlement Agreement.

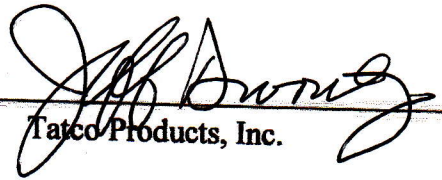
**AGREED TO:**

**AGREED TO:**

Date: 2/5/2021

Date: 2/05/2021

By:   
Ema Bell

By:   
Tatco Products, Inc.