

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region 4

In the Matter of:

Columbia Property Management, LLC

Respondent.

Docket No. **TSCA-04-2023-3107(b)**

CONSENT AGREEMENT

I. NATURE OF ACTION

1. This is an administrative penalty assessment proceeding brought under Section 16(a) of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA or the Act), 15 U.S.C. § 2615(a), and Sections 22.13(b) and 22.18 of the *Consolidated Rules of Practice Governing the Administrative Assessment of Civil Penalties and the Revocation/Termination or Suspension of Permits*, as codified at Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), Part 22.
2. This Consent Agreement and the attached Final Order shall collectively be referred to as the CAFO.
3. Having found that settlement is consistent with the provisions and objectives of the Act and applicable regulations, the Parties have agreed to settle this action pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 22.18 and consent to the entry of this CAFO without adjudication of any issues of law or fact herein.

II. PARTIES

4. Complainant is the Director of the Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division, Region 4, who has been delegated the authority on behalf of the Administrator of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to enter into this CAFO pursuant to 40 C.F.R. Part 22 and Section 16(a) of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2615(a).
5. Respondent is Columbia Property Management, LLC, a limited liability company doing business in the State of South Carolina.

III. GOVERNING LAW

6. Pursuant to Sections 402 and 406 of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. §§ 2682 and 2686, the EPA Administrator promulgated the “Residential Property Renovation Rules” at 40 C.F.R. Part 745, Subpart E,

including the Pre-Renovation Education Rule, Renovation and Repair and Painting Rule, and the Lead-Based Paint Activities Rule. It is a prohibited act under Section 409 of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2689, for any person to fail or refuse to comply with any of the rules issued under 40 C.F.R. Part 745, Subpart E.

7. The term “target housing” is defined at Section 401(17) of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2681(17), and 40 C.F.R. § 745.103, to mean, in part, any housing constructed prior to 1978, except housing for the elderly or persons with disabilities (unless any child who is less than six years of age resides or is expected to reside in such housing) or any 0-bedroom dwelling.
8. The term “renovation” is defined at 40 C.F.R. § 745.83, to mean, in part, the modification of any existing structure or portion thereof, that results in the disturbance of painted surfaces, unless that activity is performed as part of an “abatement” as defined in 40 C.F.R. § 745.223. The term renovation includes but is not limited to the following: the removal, modification, or repair of painted surfaces or painted components (e.g., modification of painted doors, surface restoration, window repair, surface preparation activity, such as sanding, scraping or other such activities that may generate paint dust); and the removal of building components (e.g., walls, ceilings, plumbing, windows).
9. The term “firm” is defined at 40 C.F.R. § 745.83, to mean a company, partnership, corporation, sole proprietorship or individual doing business, association, or other business entity; a Federal, State, Tribal, or local government; or a nonprofit organization.
10. Pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 745.81(a)(2)(ii), no firm may perform, offer, or claim to perform renovations or dust sampling without having obtained certification from the EPA under 40 C.F.R. § 745.89(a)(1), which requires firms that perform renovations for compensation to apply to the EPA for certification to perform renovations.
11. Persons who violate 40 C.F.R. Part 745, Subpart E, are subject to civil penalties pursuant to Section 16 of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2615, and 40 C.F.R. Part 19.

IV. FINDINGS OF FACTS

12. On August 30, 2022, the EPA conducted an inspection at Respondent’s office located at 2712 Middleburg Drive, Suite 101, Columbia, South Carolina 29204, to determine Respondent’s compliance with 40 C.F.R. Part 745, Subpart E. During the inspection, the inspector requested that Respondent provide records for the inspector’s review. Respondent advised the inspector that the records were not available at that time but would be submitted to the EPA after the inspection.
13. On October 7, 2022, Respondent submitted certain records requested during the inspection that included work orders for maintenance and renovation work conducted by Respondent at the following residential properties on the dates specified (hereinafter, “the Properties”):
 - a. 1321 Blanding Street #1, Columbia, South Carolina 29201, on or about May 2, 2022;
 - b. 3221 Brookwood Court, Columbia, South Carolina 29204, on or about May 22, 2022;
 - c. 1732 Crestwood Drive, Columbia, South Carolina 29205, on or about August 1, 2022;
 - d. 1410 Brennen Road, Columbia, South Carolina 29206, on or about August 11, 2022;
 - e. 527 Georgia Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201, on or about August 17, 2022; and
 - f. 4103 Devine Street #G5, Columbia, South Carolina 29205, on or about August 31, 2022.

14. The Properties were constructed before 1978 and are “target housing” as defined at 40 C.F.R. § 745.103.
15. Respondent is and was at all times relevant to this CAFO a “firm” that performs “renovations” for compensation as those terms are defined at 40 C.F.R. § 745.83.
16. At the time that the renovation work was being performed at the Properties, Respondent had not obtained “firm certification” as required by 40 C.F.R. §§ 745.81 (a)(2)(ii) and 745.89(a)(1).

V. ALLEGED VIOLATIONS

17. Based on its review of the work order records submitted by Respondent subsequent to the August 30, 2022, inspection, including records received by the EPA on October 7, 2022, the EPA determined that at the time Respondent performed renovations of the Properties as described in paragraph 13, Respondent had not applied for or obtained firm certification to perform renovations or dust sampling for compensation in violation of 40 C.F.R. §§ 745.81(a)(2)(ii) and 745.89(a)(1).

VI. STIPULATIONS

18. The issuance of this CAFO simultaneously commences and concludes this proceeding. 40 C.F.R. § 22.13(b).
19. For the purpose of this proceeding, as required by 40 C.F.R. § 22.18(b)(2), Respondent:
 - a. admits that the EPA has jurisdiction over the subject matter alleged in this CAFO;
 - b. neither admits nor denies the factual allegations set forth in Section IV (Findings of Facts) of this CAFO;
 - c. consents to the assessment of a civil penalty as stated below;
 - d. consents to the conditions specified in this CAFO;
 - e. waives any right to contest the allegations set forth in Section V (Alleged Violations) of this CAFO; and
 - f. waives its rights to appeal the Final Order accompanying this CAFO.
20. For the purpose of this proceeding, Respondent:
 - a. agrees that this CAFO states a claim upon which relief may be granted against Respondent;
 - b. acknowledges that this CAFO constitutes an enforcement action for purposes of considering Respondent’s compliance history in any subsequent enforcement actions;

- c. waives any rights it may possess at law or in equity to challenge the authority of the EPA to bring a civil action in a United States District Court to compel compliance with the CAFO, and to seek an additional penalty for such noncompliance, and agrees that federal law shall govern in any such civil action;
 - d. by executing this CAFO, certifies to the best of its knowledge that Respondent is currently in compliance with all relevant requirements of the “Residential Property Renovation Rules,” in 40 C.F.R. Part 745, and the Act, and that all violations alleged herein, which are neither admitted nor denied, have been corrected;
 - e. waives any right it may have pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 22.8 to be present during any discussions with, or to be served with and reply to, any memorandum or communication addressed to EPA officials where the purpose of such discussion, memorandum, or communication is to persuade such official to accept and issue this CAFO; and
 - f. agrees to comply with the terms of the CAFO.
21. In accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 22.5, the individuals named in the certificate of service are authorized to receive service related to this proceeding and the Parties agree to receive service by electronic means.

VII. TERMS OF PAYMENT

22. Respondent consents to the payment of a civil penalty, which was calculated in accordance with the Act, in the amount of **ONE-THOUSAND, THREE-HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$1,300.00)**, which is to be paid within thirty (30) days of the Effective Date of this CAFO.
23. Payment(s) shall be made by cashier’s check, certified check, by electronic funds transfer (EFT), or by Automated Clearing House (ACH) (also known as REX or remittance express). If paying by check, the check shall be payable to: Treasurer, United States of America, and the Facility name and docket number for this matter shall be referenced on the face of the check. If Respondent sends payment by the U.S. Postal Service, the payment shall be addressed to:

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
P.O. Box 979078
St. Louis, Missouri 63197-9000

If Respondent sends payment by non-U.S. Postal express mail delivery, the payment shall be sent to:

U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Government Lockbox 979078
1005 Convention Plaza
Mail Code: SL-MO-C2-GL
St. Louis, Missouri 63101

If paying by EFT, Respondent shall transfer the payment to:

Federal Reserve Bank of New York
ABA: 021030004
Account Number: 68010727
SWIFT address: FRNYUS33
33 Liberty Street
New York, New York 10045
Beneficiary: Environmental Protection Agency

If paying by ACH, Respondent shall remit payment to:

US Treasury REX / Cashlink ACH Receiver
ABA: 051036706
Account Number: 310006, Environmental Protection Agency
CTX Format Transaction Code 22 – checking
Physical location of US Treasury facility:
5700 Rivertech Court
Riverdale, Maryland 20737
Remittance Express (REX): 1-877-372-2457

24. Respondent shall send electronic proof of payment, within twenty-four (24) hours of payment of the civil penalty, to:

Regional Hearing Clerk
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4
R4_Regional_Hearing_Clerk@epa.gov

and

Mathew Rouse
TSCA Enforcement Section
Chemical Safety and Land Enforcement Branch
Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4
rouse.mathew@epa.gov

25. “Proof of payment” means, as applicable, a copy of the check, confirmation of credit card or debit card payment, confirmation of wire or automated clearinghouse transfer, and any other information required to demonstrate that payment has been made according to EPA requirements, in the amount due, and identified with the Facility name and Docket No. TSCA-04-2023-3107(b).
26. Pursuant to Section 16(a) of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2615(a), 31 U.S.C. § 3717, 31 C.F.R. § 901.9, and 40 C.F.R. § 13.11, if Respondent fails to remit the civil penalty as agreed to herein, the EPA is entitled to assess Interest and penalties on debts owed to the United States and a charge to cover the costs of processing and handling the delinquent claim. Accordingly, the EPA may require Respondent to pay the following amounts on any amount overdue:

- a. Interest. Interest will begin to accrue on the civil penalty from the Effective Date of this CAFO. If the civil penalty is paid within thirty (30) days of the Effective

Date of this CAFO, Interest is waived. However, if the civil penalty is not paid in full within thirty (30) days of the Effective Date of this CAFO, Interest will continue to accrue on any unpaid portion until the unpaid portion of the civil penalty and accrued Interest are paid. Interest will be assessed at the rate of the United States Treasury tax and loan rate, as established by the Secretary of the Treasury, in accordance with 31 U.S.C. § 3717(a)(1), 31 C.F.R. § 901.9(b)(2), and 40 C.F.R. § 13.11(a).

- b. Non-Payment Penalty. On any portion of a civil penalty more than ninety (90) days past due, Respondent must pay a non-payment penalty of not more than six percent (6%) per annum, which will accrue from the date the penalty payment became due and is not paid, as provided in 31 U.S.C. § 3717(e)(2) and 31 C.F.R. § 901.9(d). This non-payment penalty is in addition to charges which accrue or may accrue under subparagraphs (a) and (c) and will be assessed monthly. 40 C.F.R. § 13.11(c).
- c. Monthly Handling Charge. Respondent must pay a late payment handling charge to cover the administrative costs of processing and handling the delinquent claim, based on either actual or average costs incurred. 31 C.F.R. § 901.9(c) and 40 C.F.R. § 13.11(b). Administrative costs will be assessed monthly throughout the period the debt is overdue except as provided by 40 C.F.R. § 13.12.

27. In addition to what is stated in the prior paragraph, if Respondent fails to timely pay any portion of the penalty assessed under this CAFO, the EPA may:

- a. refer the debt to a credit reporting agency or a collection agency, 40 C.F.R. §§ 13.13 and 13.14;
- b. collect the debt by administrative offset (i.e., the withholding of money payable by the United States to, or held by the United States for, a person to satisfy the debt the person owes the Government), which includes, but is not limited to, referral to the Internal Revenue Service for offset against income tax refunds, 40 C.F.R. Part 13, Subparts C and H;
- c. suspend or revoke Respondent's licenses or other privileges, or suspend or disqualify Respondent from doing business with the EPA or engaging in programs the EPA sponsors or funds, 40 C.F.R. § 13.17; and/or
- d. request that the Attorney General bring a civil action in the appropriate district court to recover the amount assessed, in addition to the amounts described above, pursuant to Section 16(a) of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2615(a). In any such judicial action, the validity, amount, and appropriateness of the penalty and of this CAFO shall not be subject to review.

28. Penalties paid pursuant to this CAFO shall not be deductible for purposes of federal taxes.

VIII. EFFECT OF CAFO

29. In accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 22.18(c), Respondent's full compliance with this CAFO shall only resolve Respondent's liability for federal civil penalties for the violations and facts specifically alleged above.
30. Full payment of the civil penalty, as provided in Section VII (Terms of Payment), shall not in any case affect the right of the EPA or the United States to pursue appropriate injunctive or other equitable relief or criminal sanctions for any violations of law. 40 C.F.R. § 22.18(c).
31. Any violation of this CAFO may result in a civil judicial action for or civil penalties as provided in Section 16(a) of the Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2615(a), as well as criminal sanctions as provided in Section 16(b) of the Act, 42 U.S.C. § 2615(b). The EPA may use any information submitted under this CAFO in an administrative, civil judicial, or criminal action.
32. Nothing in this CAFO shall relieve Respondent of the duty to comply with all applicable provisions of the Act and other federal, State, or local laws or statutes, nor shall it restrict the EPA's authority to seek compliance with any applicable laws or regulations, nor shall it be construed to be a ruling on, or determination of, any issue related to any federal, State, or local permit, except as expressly provided herein.
33. The terms, conditions, and compliance requirements of this CAFO may not be modified or amended except upon the written agreement of both Parties, and approval of the Regional Judicial Officer.
34. The provisions of this CAFO shall apply to and be binding upon Respondent and its officers, directors, employees, agents, trustees, servants, authorized representatives, successors, and assigns.
35. Any change in the legal status of Respondent, or change in ownership, partnership, corporate or legal status relating to the company, will not in any way alter Respondent's obligations and responsibilities under this CAFO.
36. Any change in ownership, partnership, corporate or legal status relating to the residential unit(s), will not in any way alter Respondent's obligations and responsibilities under this CAFO. By signing this Consent Agreement, Respondent acknowledges that this CAFO will be available to the public and agrees that this CAFO does not contain any confidential business information or personally identifiable information.
37. By signing this Consent Agreement, the Complainant and the undersigned representative of Respondent each certify that he or she is fully authorized to execute and enter into the terms and conditions of this CAFO and has the legal capacity to bind the party he or she represents to this CAFO.
38. By signing this Consent Agreement, both Parties agree that each party's obligations under this CAFO constitute sufficient consideration for the other party's obligations.
39. By signing this Consent Agreement, Respondent certifies that the information it has supplied concerning this matter was at the time of submission, and continues to be, true, accurate, and complete for each such submission, response, and statement. Respondent acknowledges that there are significant penalties for submitting false or misleading information, including the

possibility of fines and imprisonment for knowing submission of such information, under 18 U.S.C. § 1001.

40. The EPA also reserves the right to revoke this CAFO and settlement penalty if and to the extent that the EPA finds, after signing this CAFO, that any information provided by Respondent was materially false or inaccurate at the time such information was provided to the EPA. If such false or inaccurate material was provided, the EPA reserves the right to assess and collect any and all civil penalties for any violation described herein. The EPA shall give Respondent notice of its intent to revoke, which shall not be effective until received by Respondent in writing.
41. It is the intent of the Parties that the provisions of this CAFO are severable. If any provision or authority of this CAFO or the application of this CAFO to any party or circumstances is held by any judicial or administrative authority to be invalid or unenforceable, the application of such provisions to other parties or circumstances and the remainder of the CAFO shall remain in force and shall not be affected thereby.
42. Unless specifically stated otherwise in this CAFO, each party shall bear its own attorney's fees, costs, and disbursements incurred in this proceeding.

IX. EFFECTIVE DATE

43. This CAFO shall become effective after execution of the Final Order by the Regional Judicial Officer, on the date of filing with the Regional Hearing Clerk.

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Complainant and Respondent will Each Sign on Separate Pages]

The foregoing Consent Agreement In the Matter of **Columbia Property Management, LLC**, Docket No. **TSCA-04-2023-3107(b)**, is Hereby Stipulated, Agreed, and Approved for Entry.

FOR RESPONDENT:

Rebecca T. Fouche, owner
Columbia Property Management, LLC
7-19-23

Signature

Date

Printed Name:

Rebecca T. Fouche

Title:

Broker in charge, Columbia Property Management LLC

Address:

2712 Middleburg Rd #101

Columbia, SC 29204

rebecca@columbia.pro.com

The foregoing Consent Agreement In the Matter of **Columbia Property Management, LLC**, Docket No. **TSCA-04-2023-3107(b)**, is Hereby Stipulated, Agreed, and Approved for Entry.

FOR COMPLAINANT:

for

Keriema S. Newman
Acting Director
Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4

In the Matter of:

Columbia Property Management, LLC

Respondent.

Docket No. TSCA-04-2023-3107(b)

FINAL ORDER

The Regional Judicial Officer is authorized to ratify this Consent Agreement which memorializes a settlement between Complainant and Respondent. 40 C.F.R. §§ 22.4(b) and 22.18(b)(3). The foregoing Consent Agreement is, therefore, hereby approved, ratified, and incorporated by reference into this Final Order in accordance with the *Consolidated Rules of Practice Governing the Administrative Assessment of Civil Penalties and the Revocation/Termination or Suspension of Permits*, 40 C.F.R. Part 22.

Respondent is hereby ORDERED to comply with all of the terms of the foregoing Consent Agreement effective immediately upon filing of this Consent Agreement and Final Order with the Regional Hearing Clerk. This Final Order disposes of this matter pursuant to 40 C.F.R. §§ 22.18 and 22.31.

BEING AGREED, IT IS SO ORDERED.

Tanya Floyd
Regional Judicial Officer

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that the foregoing “Consent Agreement” and “Final Order,” in the Matter of **Columbia Property Management, LLC, Docket No. TSCA-04-2023-3107(b)**, were filed and copies of the same were emailed to the Parties as indicated below.

Via email to all Parties at the following email addresses:

To Respondent: Howell Morrison, Attorney
Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd, P.A.
Hmorrison@hsblawfirm.com

Rebecca Fouche, Owner
Columbia Property Management, LLC
Rebecca@colapro.com

To EPA: Mathew Rouse
Case Development Officer
rouse.mathew@epa.gov

Ximena Vasquez
Assistant Regional Counsel
vasquez.maria-ximena@epa.gov

Bob Caplan
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caplan.robert@epa.gov

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