

UNITED STATES  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 6  
DALLAS, TEXAS

FILED  
2015 MAY 13 PM 2:48  
REGIONAL PUBLIC CLERK  
EPA REGION VI

IN THE MATTER OF: )  
 ) EPA DOCKET NO. CAA 06-2015-3317  
NOLTEX, LLC )  
 )  
RESPONDENT ) CONSENT AGREEMENT AND  
LA PORTE, TEXAS ) FINAL ORDER  
 )

**CONSENT AGREEMENT AND FINAL ORDER**

The Director, Compliance Assurance and Enforcement Division, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6 (“EPA”) (“Complainant”), and Noltex, LLC located in La Porte, Texas (“Respondent” or “Noltex”), in the above referenced action, have agreed to simultaneously commence and resolve this matter, through issuance of this Consent Agreement and Final Order (“CAFO”).

**I. PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

1. This proceeding for the assessment of civil penalties pursuant to Section 113(d) of the Clean Air Act, as amended (CAA or the Act), 42 U.S.C. § 7413(d), is simultaneously commenced and concluded by the issuance of this CAFO pursuant to 40 C.F.R. §§ 22.13(b), 22.18(b)(2), 22.18(b)(3), and 22.34.

2. This CAFO serves as notice pursuant to Section 113(d)(2)(A) of the Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7413(d)(2)(A).

3. For purposes of this proceeding, Respondent admits the jurisdictional allegations of this CAFO; however, Respondent neither admits nor denies the specific factual allegations contained in this CAFO.

4. Respondent waives any right to contest the allegations in the CAFO and its right to appeal the Final Order set forth herein, and waives all defenses which have been raised or could have been raised to the claims set forth in the CAFO.

5. Respondent does not waive any rights or defenses which have been raised or could be raised in any state law proceeding. This CAFO may not be used in any federal or state proceeding except proceedings by EPA to enforce this CAFO.

6. Compliance with all the terms and conditions of this CAFO shall only resolve Respondent's liability for federal civil monetary penalties for the violations and facts alleged in the CAFO.

7. Respondent consents to the issuance of this CAFO, and consents to the assessment and payment of the stated federal civil monetary penalty in the amount and by the method set out in this CAFO.

8. Respondent shall not assert, and may not maintain, any defense or claim based upon the principles of waiver, res judicata, collateral estoppel, issue preclusion, or claim-splitting for violations not alleged in this CAFO.

9. Nothing in this CAFO shall be construed to prevent or limit EPA's civil, injunctive, and criminal authorities, or that of any Federal, state, or local agencies or departments to obtain penalties or injunctive relief under Federal, state, or local laws or regulations.

10. Respondent represents that the undersigned representative is fully authorized by the Party whom he or she represents to enter into the terms and conditions of this Consent Agreement ("CA"), to execute this CA, and to legally bind the Respondent to the terms and conditions of this CAFO.

11. Respondent agrees that the provisions of this CAFO shall be binding on its officers,

directors, employees, agents, servants, authorized representatives, successors, and assigns.

## **II. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BACKGROUND**

12. Section 112(r)(1) of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r)(1), provides that the objective of the regulations and programs authorized under Section 112(r) shall be to prevent the accidental release of regulated substances or other extremely hazardous substances and to minimize the consequences of any such release that does occur.

13. Pursuant to CAA § 112(r)(7), 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r)(7), the Administrator is authorized to promulgate regulations dictating release prevention, detection, and correction requirements.

14. On June 20, 1996, the EPA promulgated a final rule known as the Chemical Accident Prevention Provisions, 40 C.F.R. Part 68, which implements Section 112(r)(7), 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r)(7), of the Act.

15. Under 40 C.F.R. § 68.10(a), an owner or operator of a stationary source that has more than a threshold quantity of a regulated substance in a process (“Covered Process”), as determined under 40 C.F.R. § 68.115, shall comply with the requirements of 40 C.F.R. Part 68 no later than the latest of the following dates: (1) June 21, 1999; (2) three years after the date on which a regulated substance is first listed under Section 68.130; or (3) the date on which a regulated substance is first present above a threshold quantity in a process.

16. Under 40 C.F.R. § 68.12(a), an owner or operator of a stationary source subject to Part 68 requirements must submit a Risk Management Plan (“RMP”) as provided in 40 C.F.R. Part 68 Subpart G (§§ 68.150-68.185) that reflects all covered processes at the stationary source.

17. 40 C.F.R. Part 68 provides general requirements applicable to owners or operators of a stationary source subject to Part 68.

18. It also establishes requirements that apply to an owner or operator based on whether the stationary source operates processes subject to one of three “Programs” -- Program 1, Program 2, and Program 3.

19. Under 40 C.F.R. § 68.12(d), the owner or operator of a stationary source with a process subject to the “Program 3” requirements of the Part 68 regulations, as determined pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 68.10(d), must comply with the chemical accident prevention requirements of 40 C.F.R. Part 68, Subpart D (Program 3 Prevention Program, at 40 C.F.R. §§ 68.65 - 68.87).

20. Pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 68.69(a) an owner or operator shall develop and implement written operating procedures that provide clear instructions for safely conducting activities involved in each covered process consistent with the process safety information.

21. Under Sections §§ 113(a)(3) and 113(d)(1)(B) of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 7413(a)(3) & 7413(d)(1)(B), whenever the Administrator finds that any person has violated or is violating a requirement of the Clean Air Act including, but not limited to, a requirement or prohibition of any rule promulgated under the Clean Air Act, other than those requirements specified in Sections 113(a)(1), 113(a)(2) or 113(d)(1)(A) of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7413(a)(1), 7413(a)(2), or 7413(d)(1)(A), the Administrator may issue an order assessing a civil administrative penalty.

22. As adjusted by the Civil Penalty Inflation Adjustment Rule of December 11, 2008 (73 Fed. Reg. 75340, 75346), 40 C.F.R. § 19.4, the Administrator may assess a civil penalty of up to \$37,500 per day of violation for a violation occurring after January 12, 2009.

23. “Covered process” is defined in 40 C.F.R. § 68.3 as a process that has a regulated substance present in more than a threshold quantity as determined under § 68.115.

24. "Person" is defined in Section 302(e) of the Clean Air Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7602(e), as including an individual, corporation, partnership, association, State, municipality, political subdivision of a State, and any agency, department, or instrumentality of the United States and any officer, agent, or employee thereof.

25. "Process" is defined in 40 C.F.R. § 68.3 as any activity involving a regulated substance including any use, storage, manufacturing, handling, or on-site movement of such substances, or combination of these activities. For the purposes of this definition, any group of vessels that are interconnected, or separate vessels that are located such that a regulated substance could be involved in a potential release, shall be considered a single process.

26. "Regulated substance" is defined in 40 C.F.R. § 68.3 as any substance listed pursuant to Section 112(r)(3) of the Clean Air Act as amended, in § 68.130.

27. "RMP" is defined in 40 C.F.R. § 68.3 as the risk management plan required under subpart G of 40 C.F.R. Part 68.

28. "Stationary source" is defined in Section 112(r)(2)(C) of the Clean Air Act and 40 C.F.R. § 68.3 as any buildings, structures, equipment, installations or substance emitting stationary activities which belong to the same industrial group, which are located on one or more contiguous properties, which are under the control of the same person (or persons under common control), and from which an accidental release may occur.

29. "Threshold quantity" is defined in 40 C.F.R. § 68.3 as the quantity specified for regulated substances pursuant to Section 112(r)(5) of the Clean Air Act as amended, listed in § 68.130 and determined to be present at a stationary source as specified in § 68.115 of this part. "Owner or operator" shall mean any person who owns, leases, operates, controls, or supervises a stationary source.

**III. FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

30. Respondent is a limited liability company authorized to do business in the state of Texas.

31. Respondent is a "person" as that term is defined in Section 302(e) of the Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7602(e), and within the meaning of Section 113(d) of the Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7413(d).

32. At all times relevant to this CAFO, Respondent owned and operated a chemical manufacturing facility located at 12220 Strang Road, La Porte, Texas 77571 ("Facility").

33. At the Facility, the Respondent produces ethylene vinyl alcohol co-polymer (EVOH).

34. Respondent produces, processes, stores, or handles up to a maximum of 23,000 metric tons (MT) of ethylene at the Facility.

35. Ethylene is identified at 40 C.F.R. Part 68.130 as a toxic regulated substance with a threshold quantity of 10,000 pounds.

36. Respondent produces, stores, or handles a regulated substance, ethylene, in an amount over the threshold quantity of 10,000 pounds in a process unit.

37. Based on the quantity of regulated substances present at the facility, the facility's NAIC code, and an evaluation of off-site receptors, the covered processes at Respondent's facility are subject to Program 3 of the RMP regulations.

38. The ethylene compressor, including the piping, which conveys ethylene (the regulated substance) at Respondent's facility is a covered process subject to RMP Program 3 requirements.

39. The Program 3 requirements include, but are not limited to, the development and implementation of written operating procedures that provide clear instructions for safely

conducting activities involved in each covered process.

40. On June 25, 2014, there was a release of ethylene that lasted until June 26, 2014. Then, a day later there was a second release of ethylene on June 27, 2014, that lasted 13 days ending on July 10, 2014.

41. The release was identified on July 10, 2014, when the facility noticed that the incoming ethylene amount (via pipeline) to the facility did not match the theoretical amount of the ethylene being fed to the reactors. It was then discovered that the vent valves on the tubing of the purge line around the ethylene compressor's third stage discharge relief valve (5720-500-25-33) were left open on the two occasions.

42. These vent/purge valves are only used during the Prepare for Startup Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to displace any oxygen in the compressor with nitrogen. The discharge piping of the ethylene compressor's third stage discharge relief valve vents, via piping, straight to the atmosphere.

43. The SOP states that once the oxygen is purged out of the system the vents are then to be closed prior to the introduction of ethylene into the compressor. The SOP states that these valves should always be closed during normal operations. The facility closed the vent valves immediately upon discovery.

44. The facility failed to develop and implement written operating procedures that proved clear instructions for safely conducting activities involved in each covered process. Procedure V3S2SS2 states in preparation to startup to close all vents and drains in the compressor system once oxygen has been displaced. This procedure was not performed on two occasions June 25, 2014, and June 27, 2014..

45. The venting of ethylene was not discovered for nearly two weeks and the

reportable quantity of 10,000 pounds was exceeded. In each of the two releases, the valve alignments were missed and ethylene was allowed to vent directly to the atmosphere.

46. The facility did not have a routine methodology to monitor/compare actual usage of ethylene and theoretical usage of ethylene, a common practice in petroleum and chemical production.

47. The facility emitted 195,970 pounds of ethylene to atmosphere by failing to close tubing vent valves on a line at the ethylene compressor's third stage discharge relief valve on two separate occasions.

#### **IV. VIOLATIONS**

48. From June 25 through 26, 2014, Respondent failed to implement written operating procedures that provide clear instructions for safely conducting activities in violation of 40 C.F.R.

§ 68.69(a).

49. From June 27, 2014 through July 10, 2014, Respondent failed to implement written operating procedures that provide clear instructions for safely conducting activities in violation of 40 C.F.R. §68.69(a).

#### **V. CIVIL PENALTY AND TERMS OF SETTLEMENT**

51. For the reasons set forth above, Respondent has agreed to pay a civil penalty which has been determined in accordance with Section 113(b)(2) of the Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7413(b)(2), which authorizes EPA to assess a civil penalty of up to twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) per day for each violation of the CAA.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Civil Penalty Inflation Adjustment Act of 1990, 28 U.S.C. § 2461, as amended by 31 U.S.C. § 3701 provides for increases in the statutory penalty provisions (\$25,000) cited in the Clean Air Act Stationary Source Civil Penalty Policy dated October 25, 1991 (CAA Penalty Policy). It provides for up to \$25,000 per day of violation for violations occurring on or before January 30, 1997; up to \$27,500 per day for each violation occurring after January 30, 1997 through March 15, 2004; up to \$32,500 per day for each violation occurring after March 15, 2004 through January 12, 2009; and up to \$37,500 per day for each

52. Upon consideration of the entire record herein and upon consideration of the size of the business, the economic impact of the penalty on the business, the violator's full compliance history and good faith efforts to comply, the duration of the violation, payment by the violator of penalties previously assessed for the same violation, the economic benefit of noncompliance, the seriousness of the violation, specific facts and equities, litigation risks, and other factors as justice may require, the parties agree that \$60,000 is an appropriate penalty to resolve this matter.

53. Within thirty (30) days of this fully executed CAFO, Respondent shall pay \$60,000 by cashier's check, certified check, or wire transfer made payable to "Treasurer, United States of America, EPA - Region 6." Payment shall be remitted in one of five (5) ways: regular U.S. Postal Service mail, to include certified mail; overnight mail; wire transfer; Automated Clearinghouse for receiving US currency; or On Line Payment. For regular U.S. Postal Service mail, U.S. Postal Service certified mail, or U.S. Postal Service express mail, the check(s) should be remitted to:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Fines and Penalties  
Cincinnati Finance Center  
PO Box 979077  
St. Louis, MO 63197-9000

For overnight mail (non-U.S. Postal Service, e.g. FedEx), the check(s) should be remitted to:

U.S. Bank  
Government Lockbox 979077  
U.S. EPA Fines & Penalties  
1005 Convention Plaza  
SL-MO-C2-GL  
St. Louis, MO 63101

Contact: Natalie Pearson  
314-418-4087

*IN THE MATTER OF NOLTEX, LLC*  
*EPA DOCKET NUMBER CAA 06-2015-3317*

For wire transfer, the payment should be remitted to:

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

Field Tag 4200 of the Fedwire message should read:  
"D 68010727 Environmental Protection Agency"

For Automated Clearinghouse (also known as REX or remittance express):

U.S. Treasury REX / Cashlink ACH Receiver  
ABA: 051036706  
Account Number: 310006, Environmental Protection Agency  
CTX Format Transaction Code 22 – checking  
Physical location of U.S. Treasury facility:  
5700 Rivertech Court  
Riverdale, MD 20737

Contact – Jesse White (301) 887-6548

For On Line Payment:

**WWW.PAY.GOV**  
Enter sfo 1.1 in search field  
Open form and complete required fields.

PLEASE  
NOTE:

The docket number CAA 06-2015-3317 shall be clearly typed on the check to ensure proper credit. The payment shall also be accompanied by a transmittal letter and shall reference Respondent's name and address, the case name, and docket number of the administrative complaint and CAFO. Respondent's adherence to this request will ensure proper credit is given when penalties are received for the Region. Respondent shall also send a simultaneous notice of such payment, including a copy of the money order, or check, and the transmittal letter to the following:

Carlos Flores  
Enforcement Officer (6EN-AT)  
Compliance Assurance and Enforcement Division  
U.S. EPA, Region 6  
1445 Ross Avenue Suite 1200  
Dallas, Texas 75202-2733;

Lorena Vaughn  
Region 6 Hearing Clerk (6RC-D)  
U.S. EPA Region 6  
1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200  
Dallas, TX 75202-2733

54. Respondent agrees not to claim, or attempt to claim, a federal income tax deduction or credit covering all or any part of the civil penalty paid to the United States Treasurer.

55. Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 3717 and 40 C.F.R. § 13.11, unless otherwise prohibited by law, EPA will assess interest and late payment penalties on outstanding debts owed to the United States and a charge to cover the costs of processing and handling a delinquent claim. Interest on the civil penalty assessed in this CAFO will begin to accrue thirty (30) days after the effective date of the CAFO and will be recovered by EPA on any amount of the civil penalty that is not paid by the respective due date. Interest will be assessed at the rate of the United States Treasury tax and loan rate in accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 13.11(a). Moreover, the costs of the Agency's administrative handling of overdue debts will be charged and assessed monthly throughout the period the debt is overdue. See 40 C.F.R. § 13.11(b).

56. EPA will also assess a fifteen dollar (\$15.00) administrative handling charge for administrative costs on unpaid penalties for the first thirty (30) day period after the payment is due and an additional fifteen dollars (\$15.00) for each subsequent thirty (30) day period that the penalty remains unpaid. In addition, a penalty charge of up to six percent per year will be assessed monthly on any portion of the debt which remains delinquent more than ninety (90) days. See 40 C.F.R. § 13.11(c). Should a penalty charge on the debt be required, it shall accrue from the first day payment is delinquent. See 31 C.F.R. § 901.9(d). Other penalties for failure to make a payment may also apply.

57. Pursuant to Section 113(d)(5) of the Act, 42 U.S.C. § 7413(d)(5), any person who

fails to pay on a timely basis, a civil penalty ordered or assessed under this section shall be required to pay, in addition to such penalty and interest, the United States enforcement expenses, including but not limited to, attorney's fees and costs incurred by the United States for collection proceedings, and a quarterly nonpayment penalty for each quarter during which such failure to pay persists. Such nonpayment penalty shall be ten (10) percent of the aggregate amount of such person's outstanding penalties and nonpayment penalties accrued as of the beginning of each quarter.

58. This CAFO shall not relieve the Respondent of its obligation to comply with all applicable provisions of federal, state or local law, nor shall it be construed to be a ruling on, or determination of, any issue related to any federal, state or local permit, nor shall it be construed to constitute EPA approval of any equipment or technology installed by the Respondent in connection with any additional settlement terms undertaken pursuant to this CAFO. Nothing in this CAFO shall be construed to prohibit or prevent the federal, state, or local government from developing, implementing, and enforcing more stringent standards through rulemaking, the permit process, or as otherwise authorized or required.

59. This document constitutes a "Final Order" as that term is defined in the CAA Penalty Policy for the purpose of demonstrating a history of "prior such violations."

#### **VI. RETENTION OF ENFORCEMENT RIGHTS**

60. EPA does not waive any rights or remedies available to EPA for any violations by the Respondent of Federal or state laws, regulations, statutes, or permitting programs.

61. Nothing in this CAFO shall relieve Respondent of the duty to comply with all applicable provisions of the CAA.

62. Nothing in this CAFO shall limit the power and authority of EPA or the United

States to take, direct, or order all actions to protect public health, welfare, or the environment, or prevent, abate, or minimize an actual or threatened release of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or regulated or other extremely hazardous substances at, on, or from the Respondent's facility. Furthermore, nothing in this CAFO shall be construed to prevent or limit EPA's civil, injunctive, or criminal authorities, or that of any other Federal, state, or local agencies or departments to obtain civil or criminal penalties or injunctive relief under other Federal, state, or local laws, regulations, or subparts thereof.

#### **VII. COSTS**

63. Each party shall bear its own costs and attorney's fees.

IT IS SO AGREED:

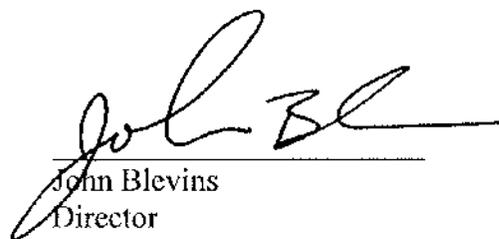
FOR THE RESPONDENT:

Date: 4-30-15

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Noltex, LLC

FOR THE COMPLAINANT:

Date: 5.7.15

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John Blevins  
Director  
Compliance Assurance and  
Enforcement Division

FINAL ORDER

Pursuant to Section 113(d) of the Clean Air Act (Act), 42 U.S.C. § 7413(d), and the Consolidated Rules of Practice Governing the Administrative Assessment of Civil Penalties, 40 C.F.R. Part 22, the foregoing Consent Agreement is hereby ratified. This Final Order shall not in any case affect the right of EPA or the United States to pursue appropriate injunctive or other equitable relief or criminal sanctions for any violations of law. This Final Order shall resolve only those causes of action alleged in this CAFO. Nothing in this Final Order shall be construed to waive, extinguish, or otherwise affect Respondent's (or its officers, agents, servants, employees, successors, or assigns) obligation to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local statutes and regulations, including the regulations that were the subject of this action. The Respondent is ordered to comply with the terms of settlement as set forth in the Consent Agreement, including the assessment of civil penalties. In accordance with 40 C.F.R. Part 22.31(b), this Final Order shall become effective upon filing with the Regional Hearing Clerk.

Dated

5/13/15



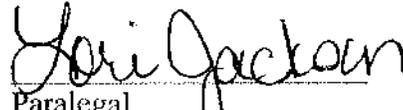
Thomas Rucki  
Regional Judicial Officer  
U.S. EPA, Region 6

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015, the original and one copy of the foregoing Consent Agreement and Final Order ("CAFO") was hand delivered to the Regional Hearing Clerk, U.S. EPA - Region 6, 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733, and a true and correct copy was delivered to the following individual(s) by the method indicated below:

CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED and ELECTRONIC COPY

Noltex, LLC  
12220 Strang Road  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor  
La Porte, Texas 77571

  
Paralegal  
U.S. EPA Region 6, Dallas, Texas