

UNITED STATES  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 6  
BEFORE THE ADMINISTRATOR

FILED  
JAN 12 PM 4:27  
REGIONAL HEARING CLERK  
EPA REGION VI

In the Matter of: §  
§  
Freedman Meats, Inc. § EPA Docket No.  
Houston, Texas § CAA-06-2017-3306  
§  
Respondent §

**CONSENT AGREEMENT AND FINAL ORDER**

The Director of the Compliance Assurance and Enforcement Division of the United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA"), Region 6 ("Complainant") and Freedman Food Service, Inc. ("Respondent") in the above-referenced proceeding, hereby agree to resolve this matter through the issuance of this Consent Agreement and Final Order ("CAFO").

**I. PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

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

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

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

4. 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, and Respondent does not waive any objection it may have to the admissibility of this CAFO in any such other proceeding.

5. Compliance with all the terms and conditions of this CAFO shall resolve only those violations, which are set forth herein.

6. Respondent consents to the issuance of this CAFO and to the assessment and payment of the stated civil penalty in the amount and by the method set forth in this CAFO.

## II. ALLEGATIONS

7. Respondent is a corporation authorized to do business in the State of Texas.

8. Respondent owned and operated a facility at 2901 Polk St., Houston, Texas ("Facility") on and about January 15, 2016.

9. At the Facility, Respondent produces meat and protein products for sale by third-party customers. As part of this process, Respondent uses ammonia in a chill tank to prepare and preserve the products.

10. Ammonia is a regulated substance listed in Table 1 to 40 CFR § 68.130.

11. On the evening of January 15, 2016, after the Facility had closed its operations, a worker employed by Packers Sanitation Services, Inc. ("Worker") was sanitizing equipment at the Facility. Worker was sanitizing a chill tank in the Chill Tank

Room within the Cooked Food Department (a.k.a., the Ready-to-Eat or "RTE" Department). Worker was the only person in the Chill Tank Room. No employees of Respondent or any company were present.

12. The chill tank has a drain that can be manually opened or closed by turning it several times counterclockwise or clockwise (a.k.a. Oil Drain Valve). Worker did not have authority to open the Oil Drain Valve and had not been instructed to do so. Although Worker denies opening the Oil Drain Valve, no one else had access to the Chill Tank Room at the time.

13. It is believed that Worker mistakenly turned open the Oil Drain Valve. When the valve was opened, ammonia was released at approximately 9:30 p.m. Worker immediately left the Chill Tank Room without suffering injury and alerted an employee of Respondent.

14. The immediate area and then the Facility were evacuated. Respondent's employees notified the company's ammonia technician, who arrived onsite, performed a safety assessment, and shut down the refrigeration system at approximately 10:05 p.m., using the emergency stop switch located outside the building. Subsequently, the remaining chemical was drained from the Chill Tank pipes, the area was vented of ammonia, and an employee of Respondent entered the Facility, while wearing proper personal protective equipment, and closed the Oil Drain Valve.

15. Respondent calculated an estimated total release of 453.6 pounds of ammonia.

16. Pursuant to section 112(r)(1) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r)(1), an owner/operator of a stationary source producing, processing, handling or storing substances listed pursuant to section 112(r)(3) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r)(3), or any

other extremely hazardous substance, has a general duty to: (1) identify hazards which may result from accidental releases of such substances using appropriate hazard assessment techniques; (2) design and maintain a safe facility, taking such steps as are necessary to prevent releases; and (3) minimize the consequences of accidental releases that do occur.

17. Respondent is a "person" as that term is defined by section 302(e) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7602(e).

18. The facility is a "stationary source" as that term is defined by section 112(r)(2)(C) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r)(2)(C).

19. Respondent is the "owner or operator" as those terms are defined by section 112(a)(9) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7412(a)(9), of a stationary source.

20. The release of chemicals at the facility on January 15, 2016, constituted an "accidental release" as that term is defined by section 112(r)(2)(A) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r)(2)(A).

21. Respondent's failure to physically secure the closure of and prevent the inadvertent opening of the Oil Drain Valve in the Chill Tank Room constitutes a violation of the general duty clause in section 112(r)(1) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r)(1).

22. Respondent is therefore subject to the assessment of penalties pursuant to sections 113(a)(3) and 113(d)(1)(B) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 7413(a)(3) and 7413(d)(1)(B), for at least one day of violation of the general duty clause of section 112(r)(1) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r)(1).

23. No injunctive or further remedial action is required as Respondent has removed the Chill Tank and Oil Drain Valve from the Facility, and Respondent is not

operating the Facility.

### III. TERMS OF SETTLEMENT

#### A. CIVIL PENALTY

24. Pursuant to the authority granted in sections 113(a)(3) and 113(d)(1)(B) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 7413(a)(3) and 7413(d)(1)(B), and taking into consideration the size of the Respondent's business, the economic impact of the penalty on the Respondent's business, the Respondent's full compliance history and good faith efforts to comply, the duration of the violation, payment by Respondent of penalties previously assessed for the same violation (if any), the economic benefit of noncompliance, the seriousness of the violation, and Respondent's cooperation, as well as other factors which justice may require, EPA and Respondent agree that an appropriate penalty to settle this matter is \$30,000.

25. Respondent shall pay the assessed penalty within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this CAFO. Respondent shall pay the assessed civil penalty by certified check, cashier's check, or wire transfer, made payable to "Treasurer, United States of America, EPA – Region 6." Payment shall be remitted in one of four ways: regular U.S. Postal Service mail (including certified mail); overnight mail; wire transfer; or U.S. Postal Service express mail - the check should be remitted to:

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

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

U.S. Bank  
Government Lockbox 979077  
U.S. EPA, Fines and Penalties  
1005 Convention Plaza  
SL-MO-C2-GL  
St. Louis, MO 63101  
Phone No. (314) 418-1028

For wire transfer, the payment should be remitted to:

Federal Reserve Bank of New York  
ABA: 021030004  
Account No. 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"

**PLEASE NOTE:** Docket number CAA-06-2017-3306 shall be clearly typed on the check to ensure proper credit. If payment is made by check, the check shall also be accompanied by a transmittal letter and shall reference the Respondent's name and address, the case name, and the docket number of this CAFO. If payment is made by wire service, the wire transfer instructions shall reference the Respondent's name and address, the case name, and the docket number of this CAFO. The Respondent shall also send a simultaneous notice of such payment, including a copy of the check and transmittal letter or wire transfer instructions to the following:

Bridget Weir  
Enforcement Officer (6EN-AS)  
Compliance Assurance and Enforcement Division  
U.S. EPA, Region 6  
1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200  
Dallas, TX 75202-2733

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

Respondent's adherence to these instructions will ensure that proper credit is given when penalties are received in the Region.

26. 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.

27. 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 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).

28. EPA will also assess a \$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 \$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.

## **B. PARTIES BOUND**

29. The provisions of this CAFO shall apply to and be binding upon the parties to this action, their officers, directors, agents, employees, successors, and assigns.

The undersigned representative of each party to this CAFO certifies that he or she is fully authorized by the party whom he or she represents to enter into the terms and conditions of this CAFO and to execute and to legally bind that party to it.

## **C. RETENTION OF ENFORCEMENT RIGHTS**

30. EPA does not waive any rights or remedies available to EPA for any other violations by the Respondent of Federal or State laws, regulations, or permitting conditions.

31. Nothing in this CAFO shall relieve the Respondent of the duty to comply with all applicable provisions of section 112(r) of the CAA, 42 U.S.C. § 7412(r), and 40 C.F.R. Part 68.

32. 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, or contaminants at or from the Facility. Furthermore, except as specifically set forth herein, nothing in this CAFO shall be construed to prevent or limit EPA's civil and criminal authorities, or that of other Federal, State, or local agencies or departments to obtain penalties or injunctive relief under other Federal, State, or local laws or regulations.

33. In any subsequent administrative or judicial proceeding initiated by the Complainant or the United States for injunctive relief, civil penalties, or other appropriate relief relating to the Facility, Respondent shall not assert, and may not maintain, any



defense or claim based upon the principles of waiver, res judicata, collateral estoppel, issue preclusion, claim-splitting, or other defenses based upon any contention that the claims raised by the Complainant or the United States in the subsequent proceeding were or should have been brought in the instant case, except with respect to the claims that have been specifically resolved pursuant to this CAFO.

**D. COSTS**

34. Each party shall bear its own costs and attorney's fees. Furthermore, Respondent specifically waives its right to seek reimbursement of its costs and attorney's fees under 5 U.S.C. § 504 and 40 C.F.R. Part 17.

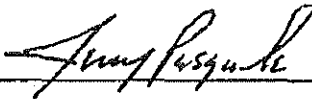
**E. EFFECTIVE DATE**

35. This CAFO becomes effective upon filing with the Regional Hearing Clerk.

**THE UNDERSIGNED PARTIES CONSENT TO THE ENTRY OF THIS  
CONSENT AGREEMENT AND FINAL ORDER:**

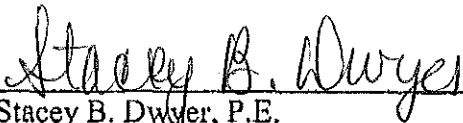
**FOR THE RESPONDENT:**

1-09-2017  
Date

  
Jerry Pasquale

**FOR THE COMPLAINANT:**

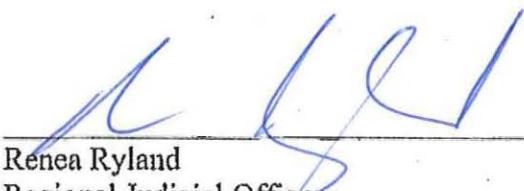
01/12/2017  
Date

  
Stacey B. Dwyer, P.E.  
Acting Director  
Compliance Assurance and  
Enforcement Division  
U.S. EPA Region 6

**FINAL ORDER**

Pursuant to section 113(d) of the CAA, 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. Pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 22.31(b), this Final Order shall become effective upon filing with the Regional Hearing Clerk.

Date: 12 January 2017

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Renea Ryland  
Regional Judicial Officer

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on the 12 day of Jan., 2017, the original and a 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 that a true and correct copy of the CAFO was placed in the United States Mail, to the following by the method indicated:

CERTIFIED MAIL - RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED: # 7014 0150000024540199

Date: 01-12-2017

Lori Jackson  
U.S. EPA, Region 6  
Dallas, Texas