

**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 1**

In the Matter of: )  
)  
)  
Premier Flipping LLC )  
8 Sullivan Avenue )  
Enfield, Connecticut 06082 )  
)  
Respondent. )  
)  
Proceeding under Section 16(a) of the )  
Toxic Substances Control Act, )  
15 U.S.C. § 2615(a) )  
)

**Docket No.  
TSCA-01-2018-0017**

**COMPLAINT AND  
NOTICE OF  
OPPORTUNITY FOR  
HEARING**

**COMPLAINT**

**I. STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BACKGROUND**

1. This Administrative Complaint and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing (“Complaint”) is issued pursuant to Section 16(a) of the Toxic Substances Control Act (“TSCA”), 15 U.S.C. § 2615(a), 40 C.F.R. § 745.118, and the Consolidated Rules of Practice Governing the Administrative Assessment of Civil Penalties, Issuance of Compliance or Corrective Action Orders, and the Revocation, Termination or Suspension of Permits (“Consolidated Rules of Practice”), 40 C.F.R. Part 22. Complainant is the Legal Enforcement Manager of the Office of Environmental Stewardship, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA” or “Complainant”), Region 1. Respondent, Premier Flipping LLC (“Premier Flipping” or “Respondent”), is hereby notified of Complainant’s determination that Respondent has violated Sections 15 and 409 of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. §§ 2614 and 2689, the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (“the Act”), 42 U.S.C. § 4851 et seq., and the federal regulations promulgated thereunder, entitled “Residential Property Renovation,” as set forth at 40 C.F.R. Part 745,

Subpart E. Complainant seeks civil penalties pursuant to Section 16 of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2615, which provides that violations of Section 409 of TSCA are subject to the assessment by Complainant of civil and/or criminal penalties.

2. In 1992, Congress passed the Act in response to findings that low-level lead poisoning is widespread among American children, that pre-1980 American housing stock contains more than three million tons of lead in the form of lead-based paint, and that the ingestion of lead from deteriorated or abraded lead-based paint is the most common cause of lead poisoning in children. One of the stated purposes of the Act is to ensure that the existence of lead-based paint hazards is taken into account during the renovation of homes and apartments. To carry out this purpose, the Act added a new title to TSCA entitled “Title IV-Lead Exposure Reduction,” which currently includes Sections 401-411 of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. §§ 2681-2692.

3. In 1996, EPA promulgated regulations to implement Section 402(a) of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2682(a). These regulations are set forth at 40 C.F.R. Part 745, Subpart L. In 1998, EPA promulgated regulations to implement Section 406(b) of the Act. These regulations are set forth at 40 C.F.R. Part 745, Subpart E. In 2008, EPA promulgated regulations to implement Section 402(c)(3) of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2682(c)(3) by amending 40 C.F.R. Part 745, Subparts E and L (the “Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule” or the “RRP Rule” and the “Lead-Based Paint Activities Rule,” respectively).

4. Pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 745.82, the regulations in 40 C.F.R. Part 745, Subpart E apply to all renovations performed for compensation in “target housing.” As provided in 40 C.F.R. § 745.83, “renovation” means 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,” and includes the renovation of a building for the purpose of converting a building or portion of a building into target housing. Pursuant to Section 401 of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2681(17), “target housing” is defined as “any housing constructed prior to 1978, except housing for the elderly or persons with disabilities (unless any child who is less than 6 years of age resides or is expected to reside in such housing) or any 0-bedroom dwelling.”

5. The RRP Rule sets forth procedures and requirements for, among other things, the accreditation of training programs, the certification of renovation firms and individual renovators, the work practice standards for renovation, repair and painting activities in target housing and child-occupied facilities, and the establishment and maintenance of records.

6. Pursuant to Section 409 of TSCA, it is unlawful for any person to fail to comply with any rule issued under Subchapter IV of TSCA (such as the RRP Rule). Pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 745.87(a), the failure to comply with a requirement of the RRP Rule is a violation of Section 409 of TSCA.

7. Section 16(a)(1) of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2615(a)(1), provides that any person who violates a provision of Section 409 of TSCA shall be liable to the United States for a civil penalty.

8. Section 16(a) of TSCA, 40 C.F.R. § 745.87(d), and 40 C.F.R. § 745.235(e) authorize the assessment of a civil penalty of up to \$25,000 per violation per day of the RRP Rule. Under the Debt Collection Improvement Act and 40 C.F.R. Part 19, violations that occurred after January 12, 2009, are subject to penalties of up to \$32,500

per violation per day, and violations that occurred after January 12, 2009, are subject to penalties of up to \$37,500 per violation per day. *See* 78 Fed. Reg. 66643, 66647. Under the 2015 Civil Penalty Inflation Adjustment Act, the maximum penalty remained \$37,500 for violations occurring after November 2, 2015 and assessed after July 31, 2016 but before January 15, 2017. The statutory maximum penalty for violations for which the penalty is assessed after January 15, 2018 is \$38,892.

## **II. GENERAL ALLEGATIONS**

9. Respondent is a Limited Liability Company in Connecticut with a business address of 8 Sullivan Avenue, Enfield, CT 06082. This is also the address of the LLC's sole member, Eder Rapalo. Respondent is a construction business.

10. In 2017, Premier Flipping was hired to install vinyl siding and aluminum trim on the exterior of a duplex building located at 32-34 Lilac Street, in East Hartford, Connecticut ("32-34 Lilac St."). According to East Hartford property records, 32-34 Lilac St. is a two family, duplex building with six bedrooms built in 1900.

11. At all times relevant to this Complaint, the house at 32-34 Lilac St. was "target housing," as defined in 40 C.F.R. § 745.83. Furthermore, the house does not satisfy the requirements for an exemption to the provisions of TSCA or the RRP Rule.

12. The work done by Premier Flipping came to the attention of EPA via a referral from the City of East Hartford, Connecticut Code Enforcement Office.

13. On May 16, 2017, EPA representatives conducted an announced inspection at 32-34 Lilac St., Hartford, Connecticut while Premier Flipping was performing work at the property. The inspectors found deteriorating painted wood trim and deteriorating painted asbestos transite siding that was disturbed as part of the siding

and trim replacement. The inspectors also found the area surrounding the building to be covered in paint chips, as well as painted debris from construction work.

14. During the EPA Inspection, Mr. Eder Rapalo stated that Respondent was not a certified firm as required by the RRP Rule.

15. On March 16, 2018, EPA Region 1 issued to Respondent a “Notice of Investigation Results” and an “Expedited Settlement Agreement,” that addressed a single RRP Rule violation, consistent with the EPA Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance’s August 19, 2015 Lead-Based Paint Expedited Settlement Agreement Policy. Respondent did not respond to EPA’s offer of expedited settlement.

16. At all times relevant to the allegations set forth in this Complaint, Respondent’s work at 32-34 Lilac St. constituted a “renovation,” as defined in 40 C.F.R. § 745.83.

17. At all times relevant to the allegations set forth in this Complaint, the work at 32-34 Lilac St. constituted a “renovation for compensation” subject to the RRP Rule. See 40 C.F.R. § 745.82.

18. Furthermore, the renovation at 32-34 Lilac St. did not satisfy the requirements for an exemption to the provisions of TSCA or the RRP Rule under 40 C.F.R. § 745.82. Nor was it a minor repair and maintenance activity as defined at 40 C.F.R. § 745.83.

19. At all times relevant to the allegations set forth in this Complaint, Respondent was a “renovator” as defined in 40 C.F.R. § 745.83.

20. At all times relevant to the allegations set forth in this Complaint, Respondent was a “firm,” as defined in 40 C.F.R. § 745.83.

21. Based on the above-described inspection, Complainant has identified the following violation of Section 409 of TSCA, the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992, and the RRP Rule, as set forth at 40 C.F.R. Part 745, Subpart E.

### **III. VIOLATIONS**

#### **Count 1 – Failure to Obtain Firm Certification under RRP Rule**

22. Complainant incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 21.
23. Firms that perform renovations for compensation in target housing must apply to EPA for certification to perform renovations or dust sampling under 40 C.F.R. §745.89(a), pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 745.81(a)(2)(ii), which provides that no firm may perform, offer, or claim to perform renovations in target housing or child-occupied facilities without certification from EPA under § 745.89.
24. The house at 32-34 Lilac St. is target housing because it was built in 1900, well prior to 1978, and is not housing for the elderly or persons with disabilities or a 0-bedroom dwelling.
25. At the time of the EPA Inspection, Premier Flipping had not applied for or received RRP firm certification from the EPA.
26. Respondent's failure to obtain RRP Firm Certification prior to performing renovation work on the house at 32-34 Lilac St. constitutes a violation of 40 C.F.R. §§ 745.89(a) and 745.81(a)(2)(ii).
27. The above-listed violation alleged in this count is a prohibited act under TSCA Section 409 and 40 C.F.R. § 745.87(a), and a violation for which penalties may be assessed pursuant to Section 16 of TSCA.

#### **IV. PROPOSED PENALTY**

28. In determining the amount of any penalty to be assessed, Section 16 of TSCA requires Complainant to consider the nature, circumstances, extent and gravity of the violations and, with respect to Respondent, its ability to pay, the effect of the proposed penalty on the ability to continue to do business, any history of prior such violations, the degree of culpability, and such other matters as justice may require.

29. To assess a penalty for the alleged violations in this Complaint, Complainant has taken into account the particular facts and circumstances of this case with specific reference to EPA's August 2010 Interim Final Policy entitled, "Consolidated Enforcement Response and Penalty Polity for the Pre-Renovation Education Rule; Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule; and Lead-Based Paint Activities Rule" (the "LBP Consolidated ERPP"), a copy of which is enclosed with this Complaint. The LBP Consolidated ERPP provides a rational, consistent, and equitable calculation methodology for applying the statutory penalty factors enumerated above to particular cases. Complainant proposes that Respondent be assessed a civil penalty in the amount of **four thousand six hundred sixty-seven dollars (\$4,667)** for the TSCA violation alleged in this Complaint. (See Attachment I to this Complaint explaining the reasoning for this penalty.)

#### **V. NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY TO REQUEST A HEARING**

30. As provided by Section 16(a)(2)(A) of TSCA, 15 U.S.C. § 2615(a)(2)(A), and in accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 22.14, Respondent has a right to request a hearing on any material fact alleged in this Complaint. Any such hearing would be conducted in

accordance with EPA's Consolidated Rules of Practice, 40 C.F.R. Part 22, a copy of which is enclosed with this Complaint. Any request for a hearing must be included in Respondent's written Answer to this Complaint ("Answer") and filed with the Regional Hearing Clerk at the address listed below within thirty (30) days of receipt of this Complaint.

31. The Answer shall clearly and directly admit, deny, or explain each of the factual allegations contained in the Complaint. Where Respondent has no knowledge as to a particular factual allegation and so states, the allegation is deemed denied. The failure of Respondent to deny an allegation contained in the Complaint constitutes an admission of that allegation. The Answer must also state the circumstances or arguments alleged to constitute the grounds of any defense; the facts that Respondent disputes; the basis for opposing any proposed penalty; and whether a hearing is requested. See 40 C.F.R. § 22.15 of the Consolidated Rules of Practice for the required contents of an Answer.

32. Respondent shall send the original and one copy of the Answer, as well as a copy of all other documents that Respondent files in this action, to the Regional Hearing Clerk at the following address:

Wanda A. Santiago  
Regional Hearing Clerk  
U.S. EPA, Region 1  
5 Post Office Square – Suite 100  
Mail Code: ORC04-6  
Boston, Massachusetts 02109-3912

33. Respondent shall also serve a copy of the Answer, as well as a copy of all other documents that Respondent files in this action, to Sarah Meeks, the attorney



assigned to represent Complainant in this matter, and the person who is designated to receive service in this matter under 40 C.F.R. § 22.5(c)(4), at the following address:

Sarah Meeks  
Enforcement Counsel  
U.S. EPA, Region 1  
5 Post Office Square – Suite 100  
Mail Code: OES04-3  
Boston, Massachusetts 02109-3912

34. If Respondent fails to file a timely Answer to the Complaint, Respondent may be found to be in default, pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 22.17 of the Consolidated Rules of Practice. For purposes of this action only, default by Respondent constitutes an admission of all facts alleged in the Complaint and a waiver of Respondent's right to contest such factual allegations under Section 16(a)(2)(A) of TSCA. Pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 22.17(d), the penalty assessed in the default order shall become due and payable by Respondent, without further proceedings, thirty (30) days after the default order becomes final.

35. The filing of service of documents other than the complaint, rulings, orders, and decisions, in all cases before the Region 1 Regional Judicial Officer governed by the Consolidated Rules of Practice may be filed and served by email, consistent with the "Standing Order Authorizing Filing and Service by E-mail in Proceedings Before the Region 1 Regional Judicial Officer," a copy of which has been provided with the Complaint.

36. Quick Resolution Option: In accordance with 40 C.F.R. § 22.18(a), if Respondent pays the proposed penalty in full within 30 days after receiving the Complaint then no answer need be filed.

## VI. SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE

37. Whether or not a hearing is requested upon filing an Answer, Respondent may confer informally with Complainant or his designee concerning the violations alleged in this Complaint. Such conference provides Respondent with an opportunity to respond informally to the allegations, and to provide whatever additional information may be relevant to the disposition of this matter. To explore the possibility of settlement, Respondent or Respondent's counsel should contact Sarah Meeks, Enforcement Counsel, at the address cited above or by calling (617) 918-1438 or by email at meeks.sarah@epa.gov. Please note that a request for an informal settlement conference by Respondent does not automatically extend the 30-day time period within which a written Answer must be submitted in order to avoid becoming subject to default.



Joanna Jerison  
Legal Enforcement Manager  
Office of Environmental Stewardship  
U.S. EPA, Region 1

September 27, 2018  
Date

## Attachment I

### In the Matter of Premier Flipping LLC Docket Number TSCA-01-2018-0017

#### PROPOSED PENALTY SUMMARY

The following provides the justification for the proposed penalty calculation in the administrative penalty action against Premier Flipping LLC which seeks to assess a civil penalty in the amount of \$4,667 for an alleged violation of the Lead Disclosure Rule and the Renovation, Repair and Painting (“RRP”) Rule. The penalty was calculated according to EPA’s August 2010 *Consolidated Enforcement Response and Penalty Policy for the Pre-Renovation Education Rule; Renovation, Repair and Painting Rule; and Lead-Based Paint Activities Rule* (“LBP Consolidated ERPP”). A breakdown of the penalty is set forth below.

#### COUNT I – Failure of a Firm to Obtain Initial Certification

**Provision Violated:** 40 C.F.R. § 745.81(a)(2)(ii) requires that all firms performing renovations for compensation must apply to EPA for certification to perform renovations or dust sampling. No firm may perform, offer, or claim to perform renovations without certification from EPA under 40 C.F.R. § 745.89 in target housing or child-occupied facilities, unless the renovation qualifies for one of the exceptions identified in 40 C.F.R. § 745.82.

**Circumstance Level:** The failure to obtain certification from EPA prior to performing renovations results in a *medium probability* of impacting human health and the environment because a firm that is not certified by EPA is less likely to comply with the work practice standards of 40 C.F.R. § 745.85. As a result, under the LBP Consolidated ERPP Appendix A, a violation of 40 C.F.R. § 745.81(a)(2)(ii) is a *Level 3a* violation.

**Extent of Harm:** The Disclosure Rule ERPP takes into consideration the risk factors for exposure to lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards. The potential for harm is measured by the age of children living in the target housing and the presence of pregnant women living in the target housing. Children under the age of six are most likely to be adversely affected by the presence of lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards, because of how they play and ingest materials from their environment, and because of their vulnerability due to their physical development. The harmful effects that lead can have on children under the age of six warrants a *major* extent factor. Children between the ages of six and eighteen may be adversely affected by the presence of lead-based paint and lead-based paint hazards because of their vulnerability due to their physical development. The harmful effects that lead can have on children between the ages of six and eighteen warrant a *significant* extent factor. The documented absence of children or pregnant women warrants a *minor* extent factor.

Respondent failed to obtain firm certification before conducting a renovation at the following 32-34 Lilac Street, East Hartford, Connecticut.

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Date of Inspection</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Extent of Harm</b>	<b>Gravity-based Penalty</b>	<b>Inflation Adjustment*</b>	<b>Total Penalty</b>
Premier Flipping	32-34 Lilac St.	5/16/17	None	Minor	\$4,500	+\$167	\$4,667

\*EPA applied an inflation adjustment using a multiplier of 1.03711 in accordance with its guidance entitled Amendments to the EPA's Civil Penalty Policies to Account for Inflation (effective January 15, 2018) and Transmittal of the 2018 Civil Monetary Penalty Inflation Adjustment Rule.