



**UNITED STATES  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
BEFORE THE ADMINISTRATOR**

**In the Matter of:** )  
 )  
**APEX TOOL GROUP, LLC** )  
**SPRINGDALE, ARKANSAS** ) **Docket No. EPCRA-06-2016-0500**  
 )  
**Respondent.** )

**PREHEARING ORDER**

As you have been previously notified, I am designated to preside over this proceeding. This proceeding is governed by the Consolidated Rules of Practice Governing the Administrative Assessment of Civil Penalties and the Revocation/Termination or Suspension of Permits, 40 C.F.R. §§ 22.1 to 22.45 (“Rules of Practice” or “Rules”). The parties are advised to familiarize themselves with the applicable statute(s) and the Rules of Practice. An informal Practice Manual, Citizen’s Guide to proceedings before the EPA Office of Administrative Law Judges (“OALJ”), and significant decisions issued by the Administrative Law Judges are accessible on the OALJ website at [www.epa.gov/oalj](http://www.epa.gov/oalj).

**Settlement.** Agency policy strongly supports settlement, and the procedures regarding settlements are set forth in Section 22.18 of the Rules of Practice, 40 C.F.R. § 22.18. The record shows that although the parties were afforded the opportunity to participate in the Alternative Dispute Resolution Process by letter dated February 5, 2016, the parties did not avail themselves of that process and, subsequently, an order of designation was issued on February 23, 2016 in which I was designated to preside over this proceeding. Each party is reminded that pursuing this matter through a hearing and possible appeals will require the expenditure of significant amounts of time and financial resources. The parties should realistically consider the risk of not prevailing in the proceeding despite such expenditures. A settlement allows the parties to control the outcome of the case, whereas a judicial decision takes such control away.

With these considerations in mind, the parties are directed to engage in a settlement conference on or before **March 18, 2016** and to attempt to reach an amicable resolution of this matter. Without mentioning any specific terms of settlement, Complainant shall file a Status Report regarding this conference and the status of settlement, on or before **March 25, 2016**. If the case is settled, a fully-executed Consent Agreement and Final Order shall be filed with the Regional Hearing Clerk no later than **April 15, 2016**, and a copy submitted to the undersigned.

Should a Consent Agreement not be finalized on or before the latter date, the parties must prepare for hearing and shall strictly comply with the following prehearing requirements of this Order. *The pendency of settlement negotiations or the existence of a settlement in principle does not constitute a basis for failing to strictly comply with the following prehearing exchange requirements. Only the filing with the Regional Hearing Clerk of a fully-executed Consent Agreement and Final Order, or an order of the undersigned, excuses noncompliance with filing deadlines.*

No later than **March 25, 2016** each party shall file a statement identifying the party's preference for the location of the hearing.

**Prehearing Exchange.** This Order is issued pursuant to Section 22.19(a) of the Rules of Practice. Accordingly, it is directed that the following prehearing exchange take place between the parties:

1. Each party<sup>1</sup> shall file with the Headquarters Hearing Clerk, serve on the opposing party, and serve on the Presiding Judge:

(A) a list of names of the expert and other witnesses intended to be called at hearing, identifying each as a fact witness or an expert witness, a brief narrative summary of their expected testimony, and a curriculum vitae or resume for each identified expert witness, or a statement that no witnesses will be called;

(B) copies of all documents and exhibits intended to be introduced into evidence, identified as "Complainant's" or "Respondent's" exhibit, as appropriate, and numbered with Arabic numerals (e.g., CX 1 or RX 1); and

(C) a statement specifying the amount of time needed to present its direct case. *See* Sections 22.21(d) and 22.19(d) of the Rules of Practice. Also, state whether translation services are necessary in regard to the testimony of any witness(es), and, if so, state the language to be translated.

2. In addition, Complainant shall submit the following as part of its Initial Prehearing Exchange:

(A) documentation showing service of the complaint was completed in accordance with Section 22.5(b)(1) of the Rules of Practice.

(B) a brief narrative statement, and a copy of any documents in support, explaining in detail the factual and/or legal bases for the allegations denied or otherwise not admitted in Respondent's Answer;

(C) all factual information and supporting documentation relevant to the assessment of a penalty, and a copy, or a statement of the internet address (URL), of any policy or guidance intended to be relied on by Complainant in calculating a proposed penalty;

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(D) a detailed explanation of the factors considered and methodology utilized in calculating the amount of the proposed penalty, in accordance with the penalty factors and policies referenced in the Proposed Civil Penalty section of the Complaint; and

(E) A copy, or a statement of the internet address (URL), of any EPA guidance documents and/or policies, including any updates or revisions to such guidance and/or policy, and any preambles to regulations that Complainant has relied upon with regard to the allegations set forth in the Complaint.

3. In addition, Respondent shall submit the following as part of its Prehearing Exchange:

(A) a copy of any documents in support of the denials made in the Answer;

(B) a copy of any documents in support of the allegations in Respondent's Defenses and an explanation of its arguments in support of such Affirmative Defenses;

(C) all factual information Respondent considers relevant to the assessment of a penalty and any supporting documentation; and

(D) if Respondent takes the position that the proposed penalty should be reduced or eliminated on any grounds, such as an inability to pay, then provide a detailed narrative statement explaining the precise factual and legal bases for its position and a copy of any and all documents upon which it intends to rely in support of such position.

4. Finally, Complainant shall submit as part of its Rebuttal Prehearing Exchange:

(A) a statement and/or any documents in response to Respondent's Prehearing Exchange as to provisions 3(A) through 3(D) above.

The prehearing exchanges called for above shall be filed *in seriatim* fashion, pursuant to the following schedule:

<b>April 15, 2016</b>	<b>Complainant's Initial Prehearing Exchange</b>
<b>May 6, 2016</b>	<b>Respondent's Prehearing Exchange</b>
<b>May 20, 2016</b>	<b>Complainant's Rebuttal Prehearing Exchange</b>

Section 22.19(a) of the Rules of Practice provides that, except in accordance with Section 22.22(a), any document not included in the prehearing exchange shall not be admitted into evidence, and any witness whose name and testimony summary are not included in the prehearing exchange shall not be allowed to testify. Therefore, each party should thoughtfully prepare its prehearing exchange.

In general, hearings are scheduled following the submission of the prehearing exchanges.

The parties will be provided with adequate notice of the scheduled hearing to enable them to meet the remaining deadlines contained in this Order.

**Supplement to Prehearing Exchange.** Any addition of a proposed witness or exhibit to the prehearing exchange, submitted pursuant to Section 22.19(f) of the Rules of Practice, must be filed with an accompanying *motion to supplement the prehearing exchange* only when supplementation is sought within 60 days of the scheduled hearing.

**Motions.** Prior to filing any motion, the moving party must contact the other party or parties to determine whether the other party has any objection to the granting of the relief sought in the motion, and the motion shall state the position of the other party or parties. However, the mere consent of the other parties to the relief sought does not assure that the motion will be granted. Furthermore, all motions must be submitted in sufficient time to permit the filing of a response, a reply, and/or the issuance of a ruling on the motion before any relevant deadline set by this or any subsequent order. *See generally* Sections 22.16(b) and 22.7(c) of the Rules of Practice.

*Dispositive motions* regarding liability, such as a motion for accelerated decision or motion to dismiss under 40 C.F.R. § 22.20(a), must be filed within 30 days after the due date for Complainant's Rebuttal Prehearing Exchange. *Non-dispositive motions*, such as motions for additional discovery, motions for subpoenas, and motions in limine, must be filed no later than 60 days prior to the scheduled hearing. *Motions not filed in a timely manner may not be considered.*

Pursuant to 40 C.F.R. § 22.16(d), a party may submit a written request for oral argument upon filing a motion, a response to a motion, or a reply. The requesting party shall propose an appropriate location for the argument. The Office of Administrative Law Judges has access to videoconferencing technology that may be utilized for oral arguments on motions, and that may minimize the expenditure of time and monetary resources in connection with such arguments. A request for oral argument may be granted, in my discretion, where further clarification and elaboration of arguments would be of assistance in ruling on the motion.

**Default and Opportunity for a Hearing.** The Complaint in this matter gave Respondent(s) notice and opportunity for a hearing, in accordance with Section 554 of the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. § 554 ("APA"). Respondent's Answer to the Complaint contained a request for a hearing. In this regard, Section 554(c)(2) of the APA sets out that a hearing be conducted under Section 556 of the APA. Section 556(d) provides that a party is entitled to present its case or defense by oral or documentary evidence, to submit rebuttal evidence, and to conduct such cross-examination as may be required for a full and true disclosure of the facts. Thus, Respondent has the right to defend against Complainant's charges by way of direct evidence, rebuttal evidence or through cross-examination of Complainant's witness(es). Respondent is entitled to elect any or all three means to pursue its defenses.

*Respondent is hereby notified that its failure to comply with the prehearing exchange requirements set forth herein may result in the entry of a default judgment against it. Complainant is notified that its failure to file its prehearing exchange in a timely manner can*

*result in a dismissal of the case with prejudice.*

**Filing and Service.** Consistent with 40 C.F.R. § 22.5, the original and one copy of all documents intended to be part of the record in this proceeding (excluding a Consent Agreement and Final Order, which must be filed with the Regional Hearing Clerk), shall be filed with the Headquarters Hearing Clerk.<sup>2</sup> Documents may be filed electronically<sup>3</sup> by visiting the website for OALJ at [https://yosemite.epa.gov/OA/EAB/EAB-ALJ\\_Upload.nsf](https://yosemite.epa.gov/OA/EAB/EAB-ALJ_Upload.nsf). Parties may also file by U.S. mail, personal delivery, courier, or commercial delivery service. Regardless of submission method, all documents submitted for filing must be signed, accompanied by a certificate of service, and served on the undersigned judge and on each party.

Documents filed electronically should be submitted online using the OALJ E-Filing System.<sup>4</sup> Parties must first register to use the OALJ E-Filing System. Registration is not automated. There may be a delay of one to two business days between when a party applies for registration and when that party will be able to upload documents into the system. Documents filed electronically must be in Portable Document Format (“PDF”), must be signed, and must contain the contact name, phone number, mailing address, and e-mail address of the filing party or its authorized representative. Documents filed electronically are deemed to constitute both the original and one copy of the document. **NOTE:** The OALJ E-Filing System is not designed to protect the privacy of any Confidential Business Information (“CBI”) or Personally Identifiable Information (“PII”), and whenever a document is filed electronically, the undersigned will consider all confidentiality claims waived.

Documents filed by mail via the United States Postal Service (“USPS”) should be addressed to:

Sybil Anderson, Headquarters Hearing Clerk  
Office of Administrative Law Judges  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Mail Code 1900R  
Washington, DC 20460

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<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to the Headquarters Hearing Clerk Pilot Project, the OALJ and Headquarters Hearing Clerk shall keep the official record and be the proper filing location for all contested cases in which an answer was filed after May 1, 2012. For more information, see the OALJ website at [www.epa.gov/oalj](http://www.epa.gov/oalj).

<sup>3</sup> Electronic filing is the preferred method of submitting documents to the OALJ on cases assigned to a litigation ALJ.

<sup>4</sup> More information about electronic filing may be found in the Standing Order Authorizing Electronic Filing in Proceedings Before the Office of Administrative Law Judges, available on the OALJ website at [www.epa.gov/oalj](http://www.epa.gov/oalj).

Documents filed by personal delivery, courier, or a commercial delivery service such as FedEx or UPS should be addressed to:

Sybil Anderson, Headquarters Hearing Clerk  
Office of Administrative Law Judges  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Ronald Reagan Building, Room M1200  
1300 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20004

A document submitted by U.S. mail, personal delivery, courier, or commercial delivery service is considered “filed” when the Headquarters Hearing Clerk receives it. A document submitted to the OALJ E-Filing System is considered “filed” at the time and date of electronic reception as recorded by the OALJ E-Filing System. To be considered timely, documents submitted by e-mail to the OALJ E-Filing System must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the date the document is due, unless another time is specified by the Presiding Judge. The OALJ E-Filing system will generate an electronic receipt of the submission that will be sent by e-mail to both the party submitting the document and the Headquarters Hearing Clerk. There may be a delay between document submission and transmission of the electronic receipt.<sup>5</sup> The use of the OALJ E-Filing System constitutes consent to the service of orders by electronic mail to the e-mail address used to register for the OALJ E-Filing System.

A copy of each document filed in this proceeding shall also be served on the undersigned and on each party, per 40 C.F.R. § 22.5(b). Documents may be served by first-class (including certified) or priority mail, personal delivery, reliable commercial delivery service, or e-mail if the party being served has provided a valid e-mail address in the record. Documents filed via the OALJ E-Filing System are also deemed to have been “served” on the undersigned. A document is considered “served” upon mailing, when placed in the custody of a reliable commercial delivery service, or upon electronic transmission, per 40 C.F.R. § 22.7(c).

*The parties are advised NOT to include, attach, or refer to any terms of settlement offers or agreements in any document submitted to the Presiding Judge, and no copies of Consent Agreements and Final Orders shall be submitted, or attached to any document submitted, to the Presiding Judge except those that are fully executed and filed with the Regional Hearing Clerk.*

**Privacy Act Statement; Notice of Disclosure of Confidential and Personal Information; Waiver of Confidentiality and Consent to Public Disclosure.** The parties are cautioned that, unless redacted, all information filed with the court will be made publicly available. Thus, the parties are hereby advised not to file any Confidential Business Information (“CBI”) or Personally Identifiable Information (“PII”) pertaining to any person. Where filing of such information is necessary, the parties are hereby advised to redact (i.e., remove or obscure)

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<sup>5</sup> The Hearing Clerk may not be able to confirm receipt of the document earlier than one hour after the transmission of the electronic receipt.

the CBI or PII present in the materials filed. This may include information that, if disclosed to the public, would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, such as Social Security numbers, medical records and personal financial information.

*To the extent that any person files or submits any un-redacted CBI or PII pertaining to themselves or their client, that person thereby waives any claims to confidentiality and thereby consents to public disclosure by EPA, including posting on the Internet, of all such information they submit. Submission of such information via e-mail will also be considered a waiver of confidentiality. To protect such information against public disclosure, parties must follow the procedures specified on the OALJ website at [www.epa.gov/oalj](http://www.epa.gov/oalj).*

**Contact Information.** Contact may be made with my legal assistant, Mary Angeles, at (202) 564-6281 or [Angeles.Mary@epa.gov](mailto:Angeles.Mary@epa.gov) to ask whether a document has been received or issued. For procedural questions, you may contact Negin Mostaghim, staff attorney at (202) 564-4694 or [Mostaghim.negin@epa.gov](mailto:Mostaghim.negin@epa.gov).

**SO ORDERED.**

  
Christine Donelian Coughlin  
Administrative Law Judge

Dated: March 2, 2016  
Washington, D.C.