

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

This Settlement Agreement is entered into between the California Air Resources Board (CARB), with its principal location at 1001 I Street, Sacramento, California 95814; and Southern Telecom Inc. (STI), with its principal location at 5601 1st Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11220 (collectively, the "Parties," or individually, "Party").

LEGAL BACKGROUND

- (1) Purpose. The California Health and Safety Code mandates CARB adopt regulations to achieve the maximum feasible reduction in volatile organic compounds (VOCs) by consumer products. (Health & Saf. Code § 41712.)
- (2) Regulation. CARB adopted the *Regulation for Reducing Emissions from Consumer Products* (Consumer Products Regulation) to reduce VOCs. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 17, § 94507 et seq.)
- (3) Regulatory Provisions. Any person who sells, supplies, offers for sale, or manufactures any consumer product for use in California shall comply with the standards set forth in the Consumer Products Regulation, including the VOC limit, ingredient prohibitions, labeling, reporting, displaying the date of manufacture, and other administrative requirements. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 17, §§ 94509-94515.) If anywhere on the container of any consumer product, the manufacturer represents that the product may be used or is suitable for a specific use in which a lower limit applies, the lowest applicable limit shall apply. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 17, § 94512, subd. (a).)
- (4) Penalty Provisions. Failure to comply with the regulatory requirements is a violation of state law that may result in penalties up to eleven thousand seven hundred ten dollars (\$11,710.00 USD) for strict liability violations each day in which the violation occurs. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 17, § 94507 et seq.; Health & Saf. Code §§ 39674, 39675, 42400 et seq., 42402 et seq., 42410 and 42411.)

CASE BACKGROUND

- (5) Corporate Entity. At all relevant times, Southern Telecom Inc. was organized under the laws of New York as a Corporation and conducted business in the State of California.
- (6) Allegations. As outlined in Notice of Violation CP22-07-07, CARB alleges that STI violated the Consumer Products Regulation by: (1) selling, supplying, offering for sale, or manufacturing for use in California, Traxx Pure Clean Tech Wipes that is subject to and exceeded the VOC standard of 0.5 percent by weight for the General Purpose Cleaner (nonaerosol) category; and (2) failing to comply with product dating requirements. CARB alleges that if the allegations described in Paragraph 6 were proven, civil penalties could be imposed against STI for each

and every day the noncompliant product was sold, supplied, offered for sale or manufactured for use in California.

- (7) Acknowledgment. STI admits to the facts in paragraphs 1 through 6, but denies any liability resulting from said allegations.
- (8) Consideration. In consideration of the foregoing, and of the promises and facts set forth herein, the Parties desire to settle and resolve all claims, disputes, and obligations relating to the above-listed alleged violations and voluntarily agree to resolve this matter by means of this Settlement Agreement. In order to resolve the violations described herein, STI has taken, or agrees to take, the actions enumerated below within the Terms and Conditions. Further, CARB accepts this Settlement Agreement in termination and full settlement of this matter.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In consideration of CARB not filing a legal action against STI for the alleged violations referred to above in Paragraph 6, and in consideration of STI's agreement to complete all terms and conditions set forth below, CARB and STI agree as follows:

- (9) Settlement Amount. STI shall pay a civil penalty of seven thousand dollars (\$7,000.00 USD). STI shall make all payments in accordance with the payment schedule in Paragraph 10 (Payment Plan and Schedule).
- (10) Payment Plan and Schedule. Pursuant to this Settlement Agreement, STI shall make payments below. First payment shall be due within thirty (30) calendar days from the date CARB notifies STI of full execution.

Payment Due Date:	In the Amount of and Payable To:
30 Days	\$3,500 California Air Resources Board
60 Days	\$3,500 California Air Resources Board

- (11) Civil Penalty Payment Method. STI shall pay the civil penalty by check, credit card, wire transfer, or portal, payable to the "California Air Resources Board," using instructions provided separately by CARB in a Payment Transmittal Form. STI is responsible for all payment processing fees. Payments shall be accompanied by the Payment Transmittal Form to ensure proper application. At the time payment is made, STI shall provide CARB with proof of payment, including a copy of the Payment Transmittal Form, to the email address provided in Paragraph 14 (Notices). CARB shall deposit the civil penalty amount into the Air Pollution Control Fund for the purpose of carrying out CARB's duties and functions to ensure the integrity of its air pollution control programs. Should

payment instructions change, CARB will provide notice to STI in accordance with Paragraph 14 (Notices).

- (12) Acceleration. If any payment is more than thirty (30) calendar days late from the payment schedule deadline, the entire remaining balance is accelerated to become due and payable immediately without notice or demand.
- (13) Documents. STI shall promptly email the signed and dated Settlement Agreement directly to the CARB Investigator managing the settlement, or may email or mail the signed and dated Settlement Agreement to the email or address in Paragraph 14 (Notices).
- (14) Notices. Unless otherwise specified in this Settlement Agreement, whenever notifications, submissions, or communications are required by this Settlement Agreement, they shall be submitted in writing to the address or email below:

As to CARB:

California Air Resources Board
Enforcement Division / Settlement Agreements
Consumer Products Enforcement Section
P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, California 95812-2815
Settlement_Agreement@arb.ca.gov (Send Proof of Payment)

As to STI:

Southern Telecom Inc.
5601 1st Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11220
alan@southerntelecom.com

Any Party may, by written notice to the other Parties, change its designated notice recipient or notice address provided above. Notices submitted pursuant to this section shall be deemed submitted upon emailing or mailing.

- (15) Repeat Violations. STI agrees to comply with all regulatory requirements and acknowledges that repeat violations could result in increased penalties in the future.
- (16) Entirety. This Settlement Agreement constitutes the entire agreement and understanding between the Parties concerning the Case Background and supersedes and replaces any and all prior negotiations and agreements of any kind, whether written or oral, between the Parties concerning the Case Background hereof. This Settlement Agreement consists of 8 pages and 34 paragraphs.

- (17) Binding Effect. This Settlement Agreement binds STI, and any principals, officers, receivers, trustees, successors and assignees, subsidiary and parent corporations and CARB and any successor agency that may have responsibility for and jurisdiction over the subject matter of this Settlement Agreement.
- (18) Effective Date. The effective date shall be the date upon which this Settlement Agreement is fully executed.
- (19) Modification and Termination. No agreement to modify, amend, extend, supersede, terminate, or discharge this Settlement Agreement, or any portion thereof, is valid or enforceable unless it is in writing and signed by all Parties to this Settlement Agreement.
- (20) Severability. Each provision of this Settlement Agreement is severable, and in the event that any provision of this Settlement Agreement is held to be illegal, invalid or unenforceable in any jurisdiction, the remainder of this Settlement Agreement remains in full force and effect.
- (21) Choice of Law. This Settlement Agreement shall be interpreted and enforced in accordance with the laws of the State of California, without regard to California's choice-of-law rules.
- (22) Non-Discharge. It is further agreed that the penalties described in this Settlement Agreement are non-dischargeable under United States Code, title 11, section 523(a)(7), which provides an exception from discharge for any debt to the extent such debt is for a fine, penalty, or forfeiture payable to and for the benefit of a governmental unit.
- (23) Rules of Construction. Any rule of construction to the effect that ambiguities are to be resolved against the drafting party shall not be applied in interpreting this Settlement Agreement.
- (24) Non-Waiver. The failure to enforce any provision of this Settlement Agreement shall not be construed as a waiver of any such provision, nor prevent such Party thereafter from enforcing such provision or any other provision of this Settlement Agreement. The rights and remedies granted all Parties herein are cumulative and the election of one right or remedy by a Party shall not constitute a waiver of such Party's right to assert all other legal remedies available under this Settlement Agreement or otherwise provided by law.
- (25) Intent to be Bound. The Parties represent that: They have participated fully in the review and drafting of this Settlement Agreement; understand and accept all terms; enter into this Settlement Agreement freely and voluntarily; have had an opportunity to consult with legal counsel; are fully informed of the terms and

effect of this Settlement Agreement; have agreed to this Settlement Agreement after independent investigation and agree it was not arrived at through fraud, duress, or undue influence; and knowingly and voluntarily intend to be legally bound by this Settlement Agreement.

- (26) Venue. The Superior Court of California, located in the County of Sacramento, shall hear any dispute between the Parties arising from this Settlement Agreement.
- (27) Counterparts and Electronic Signatures. This Settlement Agreement may be executed in counterparts. Electronic, facsimile or photocopied signatures shall be considered as valid signatures.
- (28) Release. In consideration of full payment of the civil penalty and all other undertakings above, CARB hereby releases STI and its principals, officers, receivers, trustees, successors and assignees, subsidiary and parent corporations, from any claims CARB may have based on the circumstances described in all paragraphs contained in the Case Background above.
- (29) Authority. The undersigned represents that he or she has full authority to enter into this Settlement Agreement.

PENALTY BASIS

- (30) Per Unit Penalty. The strict liability per unit penalty in this case is a maximum of \$11,710.00 per violation per day under Health and Safety Code sections 38580 and 42400 et seq. for violations of the Consumer Products Regulation. In this case, based on specific factors as discussed in Paragraph 32 (Aggravating and Mitigating Factors) below, the penalty was based on 0.29 tons of excess VOC emission and one product dating violation.
- (31) Emissions. The provisions cited in Paragraph 6 (Allegations) above do prohibit emissions above a specified limit. The VOC standard for consumer products in the general purpose cleaner (nonaerosol) category is 0.5 percent VOC by weight, effective December 31, 2012. Since CARB has alleged that the product did not meet the regulatory requirements, the emissions above the specified limit were excess and illegal.
- (32) Aggravating and Mitigating Factors. The penalties in this matter were determined in consideration of all relevant circumstances, including statutory factors as described in CARB's Enforcement Policy. CARB considered whether the violator came into compliance quickly and cooperated with the investigation; the extent of harm to public health, safety and welfare; nature and persistence of the violation, including the magnitude of the excess emissions;

compliance history; preventative efforts taken; innovative nature and the magnitude of the effort required to comply, and the accuracy, reproducibility, and repeatability of the available test methods; efforts to attain, or provide for, compliance prior to violation; action taken to mitigate the violation; financial burden to the violator; and voluntary disclosure. The penalties are set at levels sufficient to deter violations, to remove any economic benefit or unfair advantage from noncompliance, to obtain swift compliance, and the potential costs, risks, and uncertainty associated with litigation. Penalties in future cases might be smaller or larger depending on the unique circumstances of the case.

(33) Confidential Business Information. CARB may have based this penalty in part on confidential business information provided by STI or confidential settlement communications.

(34) Effect of Settlement/Reservation of Rights. The following shall apply:

- (a) This Settlement Agreement resolves the civil claims of CARB for the violations alleged in this Settlement Agreement.
- (b) CARB reserves, and this Settlement Agreement is without prejudice to, all claims, rights, and remedies against STI with respect to all matters not expressly resolved in this Settlement Agreement. Notwithstanding any other provision of the Settlement Agreement, CARB reserves all claims, rights, and remedies, whether in law or equity, against STI with respect to:
 - (i) Noncompliance with or enforcement of any provision of this Settlement Agreement.
 - (ii) Facts that were not disclosed by STI to CARB.
 - (iii) Violation of the California Health and Safety Code and its implementing regulations, or other State laws, regulations, or permit condition(s) not expressly resolved in this Settlement Agreement.
 - (iv) Any imminent and substantial endangerment to the public health, welfare, or the environment in California, whether related to the violations addressed in this Settlement Agreement or otherwise.
 - (v) Any criminal liability.
 - (vi) Any claim(s) of any officer or agency of the United States or California, other than CARB.

- (c) In any subsequent administrative or judicial proceeding initiated by CARB for injunctive relief, civil penalties, or other appropriate relief relating to enforcement of the Settlement Agreement, STI shall not assert, and may not maintain, any defense or claim based upon the principles of waiver, res judicata, collateral estoppel, issue preclusion, claim preclusion, claim-splitting, or other defenses based upon any contention that the claims raised by CARB in the subsequent proceeding were or should have been brought in the instant case.
- (d) This Settlement Agreement does not limit or affect the rights of STI or of CARB against any third parties not covered by this Settlement Agreement, nor does it limit the rights of third parties not covered by this Settlement Agreement against STI, except as otherwise provided by law. This Settlement Agreement shall not be construed to create rights in, or grant any cause of action to, any third party not covered by this Settlement Agreement.
- (e) This Settlement Agreement is not a permit, or a modification of any permit, under any federal, State, or local laws or regulations. STI is responsible for achieving and maintaining compliance with all applicable federal, State, and local laws, regulations, and permits; STI's compliance with this Settlement Agreement shall not be a defense to any action commenced pursuant to any such laws, regulations, or permits. CARB does not, by its execution of this Settlement Agreement, warrant or aver in any manner that STI's compliance with any aspect of this Settlement Agreement will result in compliance with any provisions of federal, State, or local laws, regulations, or permits.

ACKNOWLEDGED AND ACCEPTED BY:

California Air Resources Board

Signature: /S/

Name: Ellen M. Peter

Title: Chief Counsel

Date: September 11, 2023

Southern Telecom Inc.

Signature: /S/

Name: Alan Levi

Title: President

Date: September 5, 2023