



against which it appears, the length of time it appears on the screen, and its location, for an ordinary consumer to notice, read, and comprehend it; and

- C. Regardless of the medium used to disseminate it, the disclosure shall be in understandable language and syntax. Nothing contrary to, inconsistent with, or in mitigation of the disclosure shall be used in any communication.

2. “Close proximity” means on the same print page, web page, online service page, or other electronic page, and proximate to the triggering representation, and not accessed or displayed through hyperlinks, pop-ups, interstitials, or other means.

3. “Commerce” shall mean as defined in Section 4 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 44.

4. “Competent and reliable scientific evidence” shall mean tests, analyses, research, or studies that have been conducted and evaluated in an objective manner by qualified persons, that are generally accepted in the profession to yield accurate and reliable results, and that are sufficient in quality and quantity based on standards generally accepted in the relevant scientific fields, when considered in light of the entire body of relevant and reliable scientific evidence, to substantiate that a representation is true. Specifically:

- A. For unqualified degradability claims, any scientific technical protocol (or combination of protocols) substantiating such claims must assure complete decomposition and simulate the physical conditions found in landfills, where most trash is disposed.
- B. For qualified degradability claims, any scientific technical protocol (or combination of protocols) substantiating such claims must both:
 - i. assure the entire product will (1) completely decompose into elements found in nature in any stated timeframe or; or (2) decompose into elements found in nature at the rate and to the extent stated in the representation; and
 - ii. simulate the physical conditions found in the type of disposal facility or method stated in the representation or, if not qualified by disposal facility or method, the conditions found in landfills, where most trash is disposed.

For example, results from ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) International D5511-12, *Standard Test Method for Determining Anaerobic Biodegradation of Plastic Materials under High Solids Anaerobic Digestion Conditions*, or any prior version thereof, are not competent and reliable scientific evidence supporting unqualified claims, or claims of outcomes beyond the parameters and results of the actual test performed.

5. “Customary disposal” means any disposal method whereby respondent’s products ultimately will be disposed of in a landfill, in an incinerator, or in a recycling facility.

6. “Degradable” includes biodegradable, oxo-biodegradable, oxo-degradable, or photodegradable, or any variation thereof.
7. “Landfill” means a municipal solid waste landfill that receives household waste. “Landfill” does not include landfills that are operated as bioreactors or those that are actively managed to enhance decomposition.
8. “Means and instrumentalities” shall mean any information, including, but not necessarily limited to, any advertising, labeling, promotional, sales training, or purported substantiation materials, for use by trade customers in their marketing of any product, package, or service, in or affecting commerce.
9. Unless otherwise specified, “respondent” shall mean ECM BioFilms, Inc., a corporation, and its successors and assigns.

I.

IT IS ORDERED that respondent, and its officers, agents, representatives, and employees, directly or through any corporation, partnership, subsidiary, division, or other device, in connection with the manufacturing, labeling, advertising, promotion, offering for sale, sale, or distribution of any product, package, or service, in or affecting commerce, shall not represent, in any manner, directly or indirectly, expressly or by implication:

- A. That any plastic product or package is degradable, or that any product, package, or service affects a plastic product or package’s degradability, unless such representation is true, not misleading, and, at the time it is made, respondent possesses and relies upon competent and reliable scientific evidence that substantiates the representation; and
 - i. the entire item will completely decompose into elements found in nature within five (5) years after customary disposal; or
 - ii. the representation is clearly and prominently and in close proximity qualified by:
 - a. Either (1) the time to complete decomposition into elements found in nature; or (2) the rate and extent of decomposition into elements found in nature, provided that such qualification must disclose that the stated rate and extent of decomposition does not mean that the product or package will continue to decompose; and
 - b. If the product will not decompose in a customary disposal facility or by a customary method of disposal, both (1) the type of non-customary disposal facility or method and (2) the availability of such disposal

facility or method to consumers where the product or package is marketed or sold.

- B. That any product, package, or service offers any environmental benefit, unless the representation is true, not misleading, and, at the time it is made, respondent possesses and relies upon competent and reliable evidence, which when appropriate must be competent and reliable scientific evidence, that substantiates the representation.

II.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent, and its officers, agents, representatives, and employees, directly or through any corporation, partnership, subsidiary, division, or other device, in connection with the manufacturing, labeling, advertising, promotion, offering for sale, sale, or distribution of any product, package, or service in or affecting commerce, shall not

complaints and other communications with consumers or with governmental or consumer protection organizations; and

D. All acknowledgments of receipt of this Order obtained pursuant to Part V.

V.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent shall deliver a copy of this Order to all current and future subsidiaries, current and future principals, officers, directors, and managers, and to all current and future employees, agents, and representatives having responsibilities relating to the subject matter of this Order. Respondent shall secure from each such person a signed and dated statement acknowledging receipt of the Order, with any electronic signatures complying with the requirements of the E-Sign Act, 15 U.S.C. § 7001 *et seq.* Respondent shall deliver this Order to current personnel within thirty (30) days after the date of service of this Order, and to future personnel within thirty (30) days after the person assumes such position or responsibilities.

VI.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent shall notify the Commission at least thirty (30) days prior to any change in the corporation that may affect compliance obligations arising under this Order, including, but not limited to, a dissolution, assignment, sale, merger, or other action that would result in the emergence of a successor entity; the creation or dissolution of a subsidiary, parent, or affiliate that engages in any acts or practices subject to this Order; the proposed filing of a bankruptcy petition; or a change in the business or corporate name or address. *Provided, however,* that, with respect to any proposed change in the corporation about which respondent learns less than thirty (30) days prior to the date such action is to take place, respondent shall notify the Commission as soon as is practicable after obtaining such knowledge.

Unless otherwise directed by a representative of the Commission in writing, all notices required by this Part shall be emailed to Debrief@ftc.gov or sent by overnight courier (not the U.S. Postal Service) to: Associate Director for Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Mail Stop M-8102B, Washington, DC 20580. The subject line must begin: "ECM BioFilms, Inc., Docket No. 9358, File No. 122 3118."

VII.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that respondent shall, within sixty (60) days after the date of service of this Order file with the Commission a true and accurate report, in writing, setting forth in detail the manner and form in which respondent has complied with this Order. Within ten (10) days of receipt of written notice from a representative of the Commission, respondent shall submit additional true and accurate written reports. Unless otherwise directed by a representative of the Commission in writing, all notices required by this Part shall be emailed to Debrief@ftc.gov or sent by overnight courier (not the U.S. Postal Service) to: Associate Director for Enforcement, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, 600

Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Mail Stop 8102-B, Washington, DC 20580. The subject line must begin: "ECM BioFilms, Inc., Docket No. 9358, File No. 122 3118."

VIII.

This Order will terminate on October 11, 2035, or twenty (20) years from the most recent date that the United States or the Commission files a complaint (with or without an accompanying consent decree) in federal court alleging any violation of the Order, whichever comes later; *provided, however*, that the filing of such a complaint will not affect the duration of:

- A. Any Part in this Order that terminates in less than twenty (20) years;
- B. This Order's application to any respondent that is not named as a defendant in such complaint; and
- C. This Order if such complaint is filed after the Order has terminated pursuant to this Part.

Provided, further, that if such complaint is dismissed or a federal court rules that the respondent did not violate any provision of the Order, and the dismissal or ruling is either not appealed or upheld on appeal, then the Order will terminate according to this Part as though the complaint had never been filed, except that the Order will not terminate between the date such complaint is filed and the later of the deadline for appealing such dismissal or ruling and the date such dismissal or ruling is upheld on appeal.

By the Commission.

Donald S. Clark
Secretary

ISSUED: October 11, 2015
SEAL: