



Steve Troxler
Commissioner

North Carolina Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services
Structural Pest Control and Pesticides Division

James W. Burnette, Jr.
Director

August 24, 2016

MEMORANDUM

To: N C Bedding Law Licensees and Other Interested Persons

From: Jim Burnette, Director, NCDA&CS, SPC&PD *Jim B. Jr.*
Kay Harris, Sleep Products Administrator *KH*

Subject: 2016 Amendments to the NC Bedding Law, Chapter 106, Article 4H of the NC General Statutes and Sleep Products Program Enhancements

In the interest of ensuring that you are kept up to date on legislative actions which impact the Sleep Products Industry, please be advised that during the recent 2016 "Short Session," the North Carolina General Assembly amended the NC Bedding Law, to include a number of additional enforcement authorities against violations of the Law. This legislation becomes effective on December 1, 2016 and applies to any violations committed on or after that date. The text of the amendments appears below:

"§ 106-65.105A. Detention or embargo of product or item suspected of being adulterated or misbranded.

(a) If an authorized agent of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services finds or has probable cause to believe that any bedding, secondhand bedding, material, or other item regulated under this Article is unsanitary, mislabeled, unsafe for its intended use, a danger to the public, or is otherwise in violation of the requirements of this Article, the agent may affix to the item a tag or other appropriate marking giving notice that the item has been detained or embargoed with information identifying the violation(s). It shall be a violation of this Article for any person to remove or alter a tag authorized by this subsection, or to remove or dispose of a detained or embargoed item by sale or otherwise, without such permission, and the tag or marking shall include a warning to that effect.

(b) When an item is detained or embargoed under subsection (a) of this section, an authorized agent of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services may petition a judge of the district or superior court in whose jurisdiction the item is detained or embargoed for an order for condemnation of the item. When an authorized agent has found that an item detained or embargoed is not unsanitary, mislabeled, unsafe for its intended use, a danger to the public, or otherwise in violation of the requirements of this Article, the agent shall remove the tag or other marking.

(c) If the court finds that a detained or embargoed item is unsanitary, mislabeled, or contains toxic materials, the item shall, after entry of the decree, be destroyed at the expense of the item's claimant, under the supervision of an authorized agent of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; and all court costs and fees, storage, and other proper expenses shall be levied against the claimant of the item or the claimant's agent; provided, that when the unsanitary condition, mislabeling, safety concerns, or other violation can be corrected by proper labeling or processing of the item, the court, after entry of the decree and after costs, fees, and expenses have been paid and a good and sufficient bond, conditioned that the item shall be properly labeled or processed, has been executed, may by order direct that the item be delivered to the item's claimant for proper labeling or processing under the supervision of an agent of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The expense of the Department's supervision shall be paid by the claimant. The amount of any bond paid shall be returned to the claimant of the item on representation to the court by the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services that the item is no longer in violation of this Article and that the expenses of the Department's supervision have been paid.

"§ 106-65.105B. Injunctions restraining violations.

Structural Pest Control and Pesticides Division
Structural Pest Control Section • Phone: (919) 733-6100 • FAX: (919) 733-0633
Pesticide Section • (919) 733-3556 • Fax (919) 733-9796
1090 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1090
www.ncagr.com/str-pest/

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In addition to any other remedies provided by this Article, the Commissioner is authorized to apply to the superior court for, and the court shall have jurisdiction upon hearing and for cause shown to grant, a temporary or permanent injunction restraining any person from violating any provision of this Article or any rule promulgated thereunder, irrespective of whether or not there exists an adequate remedy at law.

"§ 106-65.105C. Civil penalties.

(a) The Commissioner may assess a civil penalty of not more than two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per violation against any person, firm, or corporation that violates or directly causes a violation of any provision of this Article, rules, regulations, or standards promulgated thereunder, or lawful order of the Commissioner. In addition, if any person continues to violate or further violates any provision of this Article after written notice from the Commissioner, the Commissioner may determine that each day during which the violation continued or is repeated constitutes a separate violation subject to additional civil penalties. In determining the amount of the penalty, the Commissioner shall consider the degree and extent of harm caused or potentially caused by the violation.

(b) Prior to assessing a civil penalty, the Commissioner shall give the person written notice of the violation and a reasonable period of time in which to correct the violation. However, the Commissioner shall not be required to give a person time to correct a violation before assessing a penalty if the Commissioner determines the violation has the potential to cause physical injury or illness.

(c) The Commissioner may consider the training and management practices implemented by the person, firm, or corporation for the purpose of complying with this Article as a mitigating factor when determining the amount of the civil penalty.

(d) The Commissioner shall remit the clear proceeds of civil penalties assessed pursuant to this section to the Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund in accordance with G.S. 115C-457.2.

"§ 106-65.105D. Violation a misdemeanor.

(a) Except as otherwise provided, any person, firm, or corporation that violates any of the provisions of this Article, or any of the rules, regulations, or standards promulgated hereunder, shall be deemed guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

(b) Any person, firm, or corporation that provides the Commissioner or a duly authorized agent of the Commissioner with false or misleading information in relation to a license application or renewal, inspection, or investigation authorized by this Article shall be deemed guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

(c) Any person, firm, or corporation that alters or removes a tag indicating that an item has been detained or embargoed pursuant to G.S. 106-65.105A(a) without first receiving permission from the court or a duly authorized agent under this Article shall be deemed guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

(d) Any person, firm, or corporation that removes or disposes of any item detained or embargoed under G.S. 106-65.105A(a) without first receiving permission from the court or a duly authorized agent under this Article shall be deemed guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

(e) Any person who willfully resists, opposes, impedes, intimidates, or interferes with any duly authorized agent while engaged in or on account of the performance of the duly authorized agent's official duties under this Article shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. Whoever, in the commission of any such acts, uses a deadly weapon shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(f) If any person continues to violate or further violates any provision of this Article after receiving written notice from the Commissioner, the court may determine that each day during which the violation continued or is repeated constitutes a separate violation.

"§ 106-65.105E. Report of minor violations in discretion of Commissioner.

Nothing in this Article shall be construed to require the Commissioner to initiate, or attempt to initiate, any criminal or administrative proceedings under this Article for minor violations of this Article whenever the Commissioner believes that the public interest will be adequately served in the circumstances by a suitable written notice or warning."

SECTION 1.(b) This section becomes effective December 1, 2016, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.

Please be assured that The NCDA&CS Sleep Products Program remains committed to assisting the Sleep Products Industry in gaining and maintaining compliance with the Bedding Law and regulations, to enable you to continue to manufacture and provide your goods and services to the citizens of our State. To this end, our Sleep Products Team is always available for compliance assistance discussions and inspections; and pledge our continued support to all of our allied sleep products industries in their efforts to provide clean, sanitary and high-quality products which are vital to safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of all people in our State.

We also want to take this opportunity to let you know that our Department is working to completely update and modernize our Sleep Products licensing, inspections, records and information management systems to enable us to process your applications and approve licenses more expeditiously; allow you to check on the status of your licenses and other business information at your convenience; and to provide up to date information to our field teams as well as to you and your customers. We are hopeful that we will be able to fully implement these program enhancements for the 2018 licensing year, if not before. In the meantime, please be assured that we will continue to provide you with the highest levels of service possible. . . . Please do not hesitate to call on us if you have any questions, concerns or comments at any time. We welcome your comments on how we can improve our service to your industry.