

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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The Crisis of Colored Glass Manufacturing in America

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The Glass Art Guild of Utah is joining glass artists around the world to focus concern on the recent actions of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to restrict and impede the manufacture of colored glass in the United States. Our fear is these damaging actions are being taken against colored glass manufacturers before all the facts are analyzed and other sources of particulate heavy metal pollution in the area have been eliminated as a source. In addition, we are concerned with the enormous costs each company will face in upgrading equipment and additional filtration and urge a more practical approach to addressing the heavy metal emissions that will allow these businesses to continue to be a part of a vibrant American economy.

BACKGROUND:

On February 3, 2016, The Portland Mercury published a news story alleging the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) had discovered high levels of cadmium and arsenic in the geographic area near colored glass manufacturer, Bullseye Glass. A similar find was later observed near the glass manufacturer Uroboros Glass, also located in Portland. Both manufacturers claim they were unaware of toxins being emitted from their factories, but both companies voluntarily suspended the use of cadmium and arsenic immediately while an investigation ensued. Regardless of emissions, both companies were in compliance with their ODEQ permit to manufacture glass and had committed no violations.

Both glass companies indicated their willingness to work with the ODEQ to reduce or eliminate heavy metal toxins emissions. In April 2016, the ODEQ passed temporary air quality rules requiring emissions from the glass factories to be closely monitored and remain within strict state guidelines. In addition, Bullseye Glass hired an environmental engineering consultant to improve their manufacturing process and installed a bag house filtration system on a furnace, a system that reduces emissions by 99%. However, citing concerns that this could be a national occurrence, Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon requested the EPA conduct its own investigation into the emissions of colored glass manufacturers in the US.

There are six major colored glass manufacturers in the United States: Bullseye Glass and Uroboros Glass (Oregon), Spectrum Glass (Washington), Kokomo Opalescent Glass (Indiana), Paul Wissmach Glass Co. (West Virginia) and Youghioghney Opalescent Glass (Pennsylvania). All are considered small, niche businesses and lack the influence and lobbyists that much larger polluters can muster to defend themselves. All are now under investigation for heavy metal emissions from their factories. All will need to make very costly improvements to their small businesses. The EPA investigation has caused one manufacturer, Spectrum, to decide to close their doors. All jobs will be lost at the plant in Woodinville, WA and glass dealers and artists across the nation that use their glass may also lose their source of income as glass becomes scarce.

On the evening of May 19, 2016, just hours before Bullseye Glass and the Oregon DEQ were to meet and hold a conference to discuss the progress made in complying with the new ODEQ rules to eliminate heavy metal emissions from the air, the governor of Oregon, Kate Brown, issued a Cease and Desist Order ordering Bullseye Glass to stop using materials that will force them to eliminate the production of 80% of their product after a spike in lead emissions was recorded by the air monitor near their factory. Lead was the only spike that was recorded, but Governor Brown ordered that they cease using cadmium, arsenic, chromium, lead, beryllium, cobalt, manganese, nickel and selenium in any uncontrolled furnace for the next 10 days. In addition, the conference with ODEQ was cancelled. Bullseye was not contacted regarding the lead emissions spike and the possibility that this was unrelated to their factory remains a concern. Bullseye was also denied the opportunity to discuss the progress Bullseye had made and had planned for the future. Bullseye immediately announced layoffs.

CONCERNS:

The Glass Art Guild of Utah is concerned that the colored glass industry is under attack by the EPA and Oregon DEQ. American glass art sets the standard for the world and our colored glass is purchased by over 30,000 glass artists and dealers across the United States and imported to countries throughout the world. Glass arts were adversely affected by the Great Recession and were finally moving towards recovery when Oregon took action on the heavy metal emissions in their state and requested the EPA investigation. Since that time, the largest colored glass manufacturer, Spectrum Glass in Woodinville, WA, has announced they are closing their doors. This, despite the fact that in the 1990's, Spectrum had installed bag house filters on their furnaces, and were in full compliance with Washington state's tougher emissions standards.

Now Bullseye Glass has been shut down and the closure may become permanent if a compromise cannot be reached with the Governor and Oregon DEQ. Bullseye Glass was a model company in trying to comply with the rules imposed on the company by DEQ; yet the business was shut down without anyone determining if the lead spike was sourced at Bullseye or just the result of road construction going on next to

the air monitor. In fact, there are several manufacturers using heavy metals in the area and their part in the emissions has yet to be determined.

While none of us support the uncontrolled emission of heavy metals by any business, we would request that a thorough investigation be done by the DEQ in Oregon and the EPA and that no action should be taken against these companies until it is ascertained that the heavy metal toxins are only related to glass production. In addition, we would urge both agencies to work with these small businesses in overcoming the economic and time-related barriers in making their production process safe for everyone. Until this year, all of these companies have been in compliance with state and federal environmental agencies and contributed to the healthy economy of the United States. We hope this can continue into the future.

SOURCES:

www.bullseyeglass.com (multiple news releases in News section of main web page)

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