



Issue Date: 09 May 2018

Case No.: **2014STA00084**

In the Matter of:

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR
OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH,
Prosecuting Party,

and

MIKE ZONER,
Complainant,

v.

ASPHALT SPECIALISTS, INC., and
DAN ISRAEL, individually,
Respondents.

BEFORE: Peter B. Silvain, Jr.
Administrative Law Judge

**DECISION AND ORDER APPROVING SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT
AND DISMISSING COMPLAINT WITH PREJUDICE**

This proceeding arises under the employee-protection provisions of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982, 49 U.S.C. § 31101 *et seq.*¹ (“STAA”) and the regulations published at 29 C.F.R. Part 1978.

¹The Act was most recently amended by Section 1536 of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, P.L. No. 110-053, 121 Stat. 266 (Aug. 3, 2007) (the “9/11 Commission Act”). The 9/11 Commission Act broadened the definition of employees to be covered by the STAA; added to the list of protected activities; adopted the legal burdens of proof found in Section 519 of the Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century, 49 U.S.C. § 42121; provided for awards of special damages, and punitive damages not to exceed \$250,000; and, provided for *de novo* review by a U.S. District Court if the Secretary of Labor does not issue a final decision on the complaint within 210 days of its filing.

On April 5, 2018, the parties filed with the undersigned “Joint Motion for Order Approving Settlement as to Complainant Mike Zoner” (“Joint Motion”) along with a “Settlement Agreement as to Mike Zoner” (“Zoner Settlement Agreement”)” and a proposed “Decision and Order Accepting Settlement Agreement as to Complainant Mike Zoner.” The terms of the Joint Motion and Zoner Settlement Agreement as to Mike Zoner (including any and all exhibits) are, by reference, fully incorporated herein.

The Joint Motion and Zoner Settlement Agreement resolve the controversies arising from the complaint of Mike Zoner (“Complainant”) and the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health (“Prosecuting Party”) against Asphalt Specialists, Inc. and Dan Israel, individually (“Respondents”). The Zoner Settlement Agreement is signed by Complainant Mike Zoner, Respondent Dan Israel, individually and as President of Respondent Asphalt Specialists, Inc. as well as the Counsel for the Prosecuting Party. The Zoner Settlement Agreement provides, in pertinent part, that the Complainant and Prosecuting Party, in exchange for monetary and other considerations detailed therein, will release the Respondents from claims arising under the STAA as well as other various federal and/or state statutes.

Further, the Settlement Agreement provides that Respondents will release the Complainant and Prosecuting party from all federal and/or state claims or counterclaims. Regardless of the enforceability of these provisions, this Order, however, is limited to whether the terms of the Settlement Agreements are a fair, adequate and reasonable settlement of the Complainant’s allegations that the Respondent violated the STAA. As was stated in *Poulos v. Ambassador Fuel Oil Co. Inc.*, Case No. 86-CAA-1, Sec. Order, (Nov. 2, 1987) “[t]he Secretary’s authority over the settlement agreement is limited to such statutes as are within [the Secretary’s] jurisdiction and is defined by the applicable statute.”²

I have therefore limited my review of the Zoner Settlement Agreement to determining whether the terms thereof are a fair, adequate and reasonable settlement of the Complainant’s allegation that the Respondent had violated the STAA.³ Under regulations implementing the STAA, the participating parties may settle a case at any time after filing objections to the Assistant Secretary’s findings and/or order, if they “agree to a settlement and the settlement is approved by the ALJ if the case is before the ALJ or by the ARB, if the ARB has accepted the case for review.”⁴ Consistent with those requirements, the regulations direct the parties to file a copy of the settlement “with the ALJ or the ARB, as the case may be.”⁵

The Board requires all parties requesting settlement approval to provide the settlement documentation for any other alleged claims arising from the same factual circumstances forming the basis of the federal claim, or certify that the parties have not entered into other such

² See *Aurich v. Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc.*, Case No. 86-CAA-2, Secretary’s Order Approving Settlement, issued July 29, 1987; *Chase v. Buncomb County, N.C.*, Case No. 85-SWD-4, Secretary’s Order on Remand, issued November 3, 1986.

³ *Tankersly v. Triple Crown Services, Inc.*, 1992-STA-8 (Sec’y Feb. 18, 1993).

⁴ 29 C.F.R. §1978.111(d)(2).

⁵ *Id.*

settlement agreements.⁶ Here, the parties have submitted a complete release of claims, specifically releasing all parties from liability under the above-captioned STAA claim.

I have carefully reviewed the Zoner Settlement Agreement and have determined that it is fair, adequate, and reasonable. Accordingly, it is hereby **ORDERED** that the Zoner Settlement Agreement is **APPROVED**, and the complaints that gave rise to this litigation are **DISMISSED** with prejudice.

PETER B. SILVAIN, JR.
Administrative Law Judge

⁶ See *Biddy v. Alyeska Pipeline Serv. Co.*, ARB Nos. 96-109, 97-015, ALJ No. 95-TSC-7, slip op. at 3 (ARB Dec. 3, 1996).