

quiet communities[^]

July 22, 2016

Tim Dorsey, CEO Echo
Inc. 400 Oakwood Rd
Lake Zurich, IL 60047

Dear Mr. Dorsey:

We are writing to bring to your attention a recent email to the Town of Huntington, NY (dated May 23, 2016) from your former vice president, Larry Will. Mr. Will claims that he is a paid representative of Echo, Inc. and represents the industry. Does he only represent Echo or other companies as well? If the latter, please let us know and we will send copies of this letter to those companies.

The email addresses a public service announcement (PSA; Keeping Our Communities Clean, Green, Serene, and Healthy) in which our organization (Quiet Communities) and the American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA) participated for the purpose of educating residents on gas leaf blowers (GLB) and alternatives. In his email, Mr. Will makes false, misleading and disparaging remarks that undermine: (1) efforts to protect worker health and public health; and, (2) the integrity and reputation of our organization. We assume this is not Echo's intention.

// Mr. Will does represent Echo, we ask that you send a letter to the Town of Huntington retracting his misstatements (copying our organization), and going forward, instruct him to refrain from communicating this type of misleading and disparaging information to communities. In the event he is not your representative, please ask him to refrain from identifying himself as such.

Of special concern are the following assertions and implications:

- **Mr. Will asserts that the PSA is no more than an "extension of a sales pitch for electric leaf blowers."** This assertion is false. Quiet Communities is an independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization providing education and outreach on environmental and health issues related to gas powered outdoor maintenance practices and on quieter, more sustainable, healthier solutions. Quiet Communities and AGZA have no financial interest in equipment of any kind. Quiet Communities promotes the use of quieter, cleaner, and healthier practices (including manual methods) instead of noisy and polluting technologies. It is Mr. Will, not Quiet Communities, making a sales pitch.
- Mr. Will asserts that the issue of noise remains the only real drawback to using the GLB. Air pollution from **GLBs is "insignificant."** These remarks are false. Mr. Will ignores well documented GLB emissions of toxic and carcinogenic exhaust. These include volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and fine particulate matter (PM2.5). Mr. Will must be cognizant that most GLBs in the United States run on 2-stroke engines and that even newer GLBs still produce levels of these exhaust emissions. As such, avoiding use of GLBs and other gas-powered lawn and garden equipment is recommended by federal, state, and local air quality agencies. Furthermore, he must also be aware that regardless of industry training materials and guidelines, GLBs are often used out of compliance. For instance, it is common to operate multiple machines simultaneously on a

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single property. This multiplies the amount of localized exhaust pollution, especially PM2.5. He must also be aware that loud noise and the types of pollution emitted by GLBs poses special risks to vulnerable populations, including workers, children, seniors, and others with underlying illnesses. This has been emphasized by major medical, environmental, and government organizations. What gives Mr. Will the authority to challenge their conclusions?

- **Mr. Will asserts that buying quieter GLBs is the solution.** This statement is not supported by the facts. Mr. Will has no control over the purchasing behavior of landscape equipment companies. Nor can he control how they operate GLBs, which is frequently out of compliance with industry training materials/guidelines. Furthermore, the majority of commercial GLBs are far noisier (10 to 100-fold noisier) than the quieter blowers (65 decibels at 50 feet) currently on the market. According to the industry's own training materials, GLB sound far exceeds thresholds known to cause permanent hearing damage and other non-auditory health problems.
- **Mr. Will asserts that various misleading statements about electric blowers** (e.g., not as quiet as you might think; don't have enough power for professional use; slow on the job). Mr. Will is woefully behind the times and needs to catch up on advances in eTectnftechhofogy. He uses outdated examples of electric leaf blowers that bear ho resemblance to today's advanced equipment. Lithium battery powered leaf blowers are here and now: practical, cost-effective, efficient, cordless, and safe. This is evidenced by steady growth in the number of properties and landscape companies using this advanced equipment and thriving.
- **Mr. Will asserts that the lithium ion batteries used in electric leaf blowers are vulnerable to catching fire.** We have looked hard and found no such instances involving lithium batteries used in lawn and garden equipment. One must ask: if the batteries are so risky, how does Mr. Will explain the fact that almost every maker of powered lawn-and-garden equipment—the industry he represents—now make and sell a wide range of machines that run on lithium-ion batteries? The fires that have made headlines involved poorly made batteries used in cheap, mass-market "hoverboards," or prototypes in limited use—not modern leaf blowers. The reality is that igniting of fires by lawn and garden equipment has involved gas-powered machines, as documented in numerous recalls.

In closing, we hope that Echo is as enthusiastic as we are about transitioning landscape maintenance practitioners towards using non-petroleum based technologies that would restore peace, quiet, and fresh air to our communities. This would go a long way to diminishing the distress of citizens in communities across the country, restore the rights of residents to enjoy their property, protect worker and public health, and avoid the process of enacting and enforcing GLB regulations,

We urge your attention to this matter and look forward to hearing from you. Please feel free to contact us. We would be happy to work with you.

Sincerely,



Jamie Banks, PhD, MS
Executive Director

Cc: R Reibstein and J Kempthome, Co-Chairs, Legal Advisory Council; Jo-Ann Raia, Town Clerk, Huntington, NY