

U.S.-EU SAFE HARBOR FRAMEWORK

5. The U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework provides a method for U.S. companies to transfer personal data outside of Europe that is consistent with the requirements of the European Union Directive on Data Protection (“Directive”). Enacted in 1995, the Directive sets forth European Union (“EU”) requirements for privacy and the protection of personal data. Among other things, it requires EU Member States to implement legislation that prohibits the transfer of personal data outside the EU, with exceptions, unless the European Commission (“EC”) has made a determination that the recipient jurisdiction’s laws ensure the protection of such personal data. *See* Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (Oct. 24, 1995), *available at* <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:31995L0046:EN:HTML>. This determination is commonly referred to as meeting the EU’s “adequacy” standard.
6. To satisfy the EU adequacy standard for certain commercial transfers, the U.S. Department of Commerce (“Commerce”) and the EC negotiated the U.S.-EU Safe Harbor Framework, which went into effect in 2000. The Safe Harbor allows U.S. companies to transfer personal data lawfully from the EU. To join the Safe Harbor, a company must self-certify to Commerce that it complies with seven principles and related requirements that have been deemed to meet the EU’s adequacy standard.
7. Companies under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (“FTC”), as well as the U.S. Department of Transportation, are eligible to join the Safe Harbor. A company under the FTC’s jurisdiction that self-certifies to the Safe Harbor principles but fails to implement them may be subject to an enforcement action based on the FTC’s deception authority under Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act.
8. Commerce maintains a public website, www.export.gov/safeharbor, where it posts the names of companies that have self-certified to the Safe Harbor. The listing of companies indicates whether their self-certification is “current” or “not current.” Companies are required to re-certify every year in order to retain their status as “current” members of the Safe Harbor framework. According to the Safe Harbor website, “Organizations should notify the Department of Commerce if their representation to the Department is no longer valid. Failure to do so could constitute a misrepresentation.” *See* Safe Harbor List, *available at* <http://web.ita.doc.gov/safeharbor/shlist.nsf/webPages/safe+harbor+list>.

VIOLATIONS OF SECTION 5 OF THE FTC ACT

9. In November 2002, respondent submitted to Commerce a self-certification to the Safe Harbor, which it renewed in November 2003, November 2004, and November 2005.
10. In November 2006, respondent did not renew its self-certification to the Safe Harbor, and Commerce updated respondent’s status to “not current” on its public website. To date,

respondent has not renewed its self-certification to the Safe Harbor and remains in “not current” status on Commerce’s website. (Exhibit A, Declaration of Damon C. Greer).

11. From at least December 2002 until July 2009, respondent has disseminated or caused to be disseminated privacy policies and statements on the www.expatedge.com website, including, but not limited to, the following statements:

ExpateEdge self-certifies the Policy to the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Safe Harbor Privacy Program.

Exhibit B, December 2002 Privacy Policy; Exhibit C, Aug. 2004 Privacy Policy; Exhibit D, Dec. 2007 Privacy Policy; Exhibit E, Apr. 2009 Privacy Policy.

12. Through the means described in Paragraph 11, respondent represented, expressly or by implication, that it is a current participant in the Safe Harbor.
13. In truth and in fact, since November 2006, respondent has not been a current participant in the Safe Harbor. Therefore, the representations set forth in Paragraph 11 were, and are, false or misleading.
14. The acts and practices of respondents as alleged in this complaint constitute unfair or deceptive acts or practices in or affecting commerce in violation of Section 5(a) of the Federal Trade Commission Act.

THEREFORE, the Federal Trade Commission this ninth day of November, 2009, has issued this complaint against respondent.

By the Commission.

Donald S. Clark
Secretary