BRIAN J. HEFFERNAN, ESQ. [Bar No. 132845] ALEXANDRA J. NEWSOM, ESQ. [Bar No. 239615] NOX FILED ENGSTROM, LIPSCOMB & LACK SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA 10100 Santa Monica Boulevard, 12th Floor Los Angeles, California 90067-4107 PH: (310) 552-3800 FX: (310) 552-9434 3 JUL 1 4 2011 FIN GARY M. BLAIR, Executive Officer Attorneys for Plaintiffs DAVID CANNELL, et al. 5 Mulua. Merilee A. Jay. Deputy Clerk 6 ATT 7 ĈŨĎ ŜĨ 8 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA 9 COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA 10 DAVID CANNELL: JOHN BOSTWICK) 11 CASE NO. 1381875 and CHARMAINE BOSTWICK; ALAN 12 CHRIST and **ELAINE** CHRIST COMMUNITY RADIO, INC.; JULIE BARBARA DANLEY: FRENCH: COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES FOR: HOWARD NORMAN FRIEDENBERG and SUSAN MARIE FRIEDENBERG: 14 STRICT PRODUCTS (1)GATES; N DAVID **MELISSA** LIABILITY – FAILURE TO 15 TIMOTHY and LAURA WARN WILKINSON; JILL V. HARPER; DENISE 16 and DONALD HINKLE ÓSBORN **(2) NEGLIGENCE** TAYLOR: GRAHAM HURVITZ and 17 KIMBERLY **HURVITZ:** SHIRLEY KADLEC and DONALD KADLEC LINDA KAPLAN and BRIAN ROBBINS 18 JOHN P. KENNY, Individually and as 19 Trustee for THE KENNY FAMILY TRUST; WILLIAM KOONCE and KATE 20 KOONCE; KATHERINE JEAN KOURY JOSEPH LAUNIE and GILLIAN LAUNIE, Individually and as Trustees for 21 THE LAUNIE, JOSEPH JOHN AND MARY GILLIAM 2003 REVOCABLE TRUST 3/12/2003; ROBERT L. LAWSON 22 and ELLEN LAWSON, Individually and as 23 Trustees for THE LAWSON_FAMILY LIVING TRUST; LARRY LEVEILLE and 24 PATRICIA GARY: MARILYN MAHAFFEY, Individually and as Trustee 25 MARILYN THE **MAHAFFEY** 26 CATHIALEEN and MAHAFFEY; RICHARD C. MARSH and KAY F. MARSH, Individually and as Trustees for THE MARSH FAMILY 27

MARTIN.

TRUST; KATHERINE

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	LD) [II.]
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MAY 11, 1994; DOROTHY PERKI	NS)
Individually and as Trustees for T	篮(
TIMOTHY REMY and KATHLE	EN)
11 REMY; THOMAS PAUL RIEDERE CATHLEEN SMITH; ROULET	:R;) TE)
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13 and as Trustees for THE JOSEPH AN	ND)
14 MICHAEL VILKIN and G STEVI	EN)
WRIGHT; JAMES WINTER; a BRIGITTA "ANU" WISSMANN;	nd) (
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Plaintiffs,	}
18 v.	}
STIHL INCORPORATED; A-C 19 MOWER SHOPS, INC.:ORCHAR	K)
19 MOWER SHOPS, INC.;ORCHAF SERVICES, INC. dba ALL AROUN 20 LANDSCAPE SUPPLY; and Does 1 - 10	\widetilde{W}
inclusive,	,,,
Defendants.	}

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COME NOW Plaintiffs DAVID CANNELL; JOHN BOSTWICK and CHARMAINE BOSTWICK; ALAN CHRIST and ELAINE CHRIST; COMMUNITY RADIO, INC.; JULIE DANLEY; BARBARA S. FRENCH; HOWARD NORMAN FRIEDENBERG and SUSAN MARIE FRIEDENBERG; DAVID GATES; MELISSA GILL; TIMOTHY GILL and LAURA WILKINSON; JILL V. HARPER; DENISE HINKLE and DONALD OSBORN TAYLOR;

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and each of them, and alleging as follows:

THE PARTIES

1. At all relevant times, Plaintiffs were and are residents of the County of Santa Barbara, State of California, within the jurisdiction of this Court. At all relevant times, Plaintiffs

owned and/or resided at dwellings located in Santa Barbara County as follows:

DAVID CANNELL owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 2850 Holly Road Santa Barbara, California 93105.

JOHN BOSTWICK and CHARMAINE BOSTWICK owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 2820 Holly Road, Santa Barbara, California 93130.

ALAN CHRIST and ELAINE CHRIST owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1025 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

COMMUNITY RADIO, INC. owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 3035 Gibraltar Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

JULIE DANLEY owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1215 Tunnel Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

BARBARA S. FRENCH owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1165A Tunnel Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

HOWARD NORMAN FRIEDENBERG and SUSAN MARIE FRIEDENBERG owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1255 Tunnel Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

DAVID GATES owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1200 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105 and 1186 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

MELISSA GILL owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1234 Mission Canyon Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

TIMOTHY GILL and LAURA WILKINSON owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1234 Mission Canyon Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

JILL V. HARPER owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1215 Tunnel Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

DENISE HINKLE and DONALD OSBORN TAYLOR owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1105 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

GRAHAM HURVITZ and KIMBERLY HURVITZ owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 4581 Via Maria, Santa Barbara, California 93117.

SHIRLEY KADLEC and DONALD KADLEC owned and/or resided at the structure(s)

located at 2840 Holly Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

LINDA KAPLAN and BRIAN ROBBINS owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1108 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

JOHN P. KENNY, Individually and as Trustee for THE KENNY FAMILY TRUST, owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1299 Tunnel Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

WILLIAM KOONCE and KATE KOONCE owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 2815 Holly Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

KATHERINE JEAN KOURY owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 2600 Holly Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

JOSEPH LAUNIE and GILLIAN LAUNIE, Individually and as Trustees for THE LAUNIE, JOSEPH JOHN AND MARY GILLIAM 2003 REVOCABLE TRUST 3/12/2003, owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1165K Tunnel Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

ROBERT L. LAWSON and ELLEN LAWSON, Individually and as Trustees for THE LAWSON FAMILY LIVING TRUST, owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1501 Mission Canyon Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

LARRY LEVEILLE and PATRICIA GARY owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1125 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

MARILYN MAHAFFEY, Individually and as Trustee for THE MARILYN MAHAFFEY TRUST, and CATHIALEEN MAHAFFEY owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1041 Palomino Road Santa Barbara, California 93105.

RICHARD C. MARSH and KAY F. MARSH, Individually and as Trustees for THE MARSH FAMILY TRUST owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1265 Tunnel Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

KATHERINE MARTIN, Individually and as Trustee of THE MARTIN-DUNN RANKIN TRUST, JULIE BUCKLEY, and JON C. MARTIN owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1165 Tunnel Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

JAMES MASSIE and SUSAN KUROMIYA owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1480 Mission Canyon Drive, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

SUSAN MAZER and JOHN DAMUTH owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1139 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

MIKE MAZZETTI and ELIZABETH MAZZETTI owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1168 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

LEE MENICHELLA and ADELE MENICHELLA owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1113 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93105.

JUDITH MAY MILLER, Individually and as Trustee of THE JUDITH MILLER TRUST, owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 2621 Tunnel Road #H, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

PHILIP MIRA owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1091 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

LORNA LEA MOORE and DONALD ALEXANDER McGILVRAY, III, Individually and as Trustees for DECLARATION OF TRUST DATED MAY 11, 1994 owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 2108 Los Canoas Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

DOROTHY PERKINS SEWELL and DAVID DARLINGTON, Individually and as Trustees for THE DOROTHY BERRY PERKINS TRUST, owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1414 Paseo del Ocaso, Santa Barbara, California 93105 and 1416 Paseo del Ocaso, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

TIMOTHY REMY and KATHLEEN REMY owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1110 Palomino Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

THOMAS PAUL RIEDERER owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1215 Tunnel Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

CATHLEEN SMITH owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1528 Mission Canyon Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

ROULETTE WILLIAM SMITH owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 2600 Foothill Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

JOSEPH A. TASCA and JENNIFER M. TASCA, Individually and as Trustees for THE JOSEPH AND JENNIFER TASCA LIVING TRUST, owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 103 Via Tusa, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

MICHAEL VILKIN and G. STEVEN WRIGHT owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 2921 Holly Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

JAMES WINTER owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 1242 Tunnel Road Santa Barbara, California 93105.

BRIGITTA "ANU" WISSMANN owned and/or resided at the structure(s) located at 2600 Foothill Road, Santa Barbara, California 93105.

- 2. At all relevant times, Defendant STIHL INCORPORATED ("STIHL") was and is a Delaware corporation with its principal place of business in Virginia Beach, Virginia. STIHL was conducting business throughout the United States and including in the County and City of Santa Barbara at all relevant times to this action. STIHL was the manufacturer, designer and producer of the two subject brushcutters outlined below.
- 3. Defendant A-OK MOWER SHOPS, INC. ("A-OK") is a California Corporation doing business in the County of Santa Barbara at 14 N. Milpas Street, Santa Barbara, California 93103. A-OK was the retailer/supplier of one of the two subject brushcutters outlined below.
- 4. Defendant ORCHARD SERVICES, INC. ("ORCHARD SERVICES") is a California Corporation doing business as ALL AROUND LANDSCAPE SUPPLY in the County of Santa Barbara at 4159 State Street #A, Santa Barbara, California CA 93110. ORCHARD SERVICES was the retailer/supplier of the other of the two subject brushcutters outlined below.
- 5. Plaintiffs are ignorant of the true names and capacities of the Defendants sued in this complaint as DOES 1 through 100 and therefore sue these Defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiffs will amend this Complaint to allege their true names and capacities when ascertained. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and on that basis allege, that each of the Defendants designated as "DOE" are legally responsible in some manner for the events and happenings herein alleged and that Plaintiffs' damages as alleged herein were proximately caused by such Defendants.

6. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and thereon allege, that at all times herein mentioned, DOES 1-100 were agents, servants, employees, and/or joint venturers of each of the remaining Defendants and were at all times herein mentioned, acting within the course, scope and purpose of said agency, service, employment and/or joint venture. Each of the defendants were in the chain of distribution of the subject brushcutters outlined below.

FACTUAL SUMMARY

- 7. Paragraphs 1 through 6 are incorporated by reference as if fully set forth in this cause of action.
- 8. Defendant STIHL is a manufacturer of high end chain saws, edgers, leaf blowers, trimmers, and other high-end landscaping tools and components. STIHL products are sold and repaired through a network of almost 8,000 dealers in the United States. These dealers' technicians are trained by STIHL extensively on the products and the features that they offer and how to properly test and repair the units. This extensive dealer network allows STIHL to sell products without being associated with the "big box" stores that don't offer the same personalized attention as repair and maintenance shops.
- 9. STIHL's commitment to personalized service is evidenced by its deliberate policy against on-line sales of their machinery. When an authorized STIHL dealer sells a STIHL product, STIHL expects that dealer to have personal contact with each customer. This ensures that the correct product is selected for the customer's particular requirement and that an appropriate handover is carried out to provide awareness of safety precautions and the correct use of each tool, at an appropriate level to suit each individual STIHL customer. STIHL's authorized dealers, including Defendants ORCHARD SERVICES and A-OK, play an integral role in the sale of STIHL products. This message and philosophy permeates the entire distribution process to the end-user consumer. STIHL is not a caveat emptor manufacturer. The consumer expectation associated with this product is one of safety and reliability.
- 10. The STIHL FS 110 trimmer/brushcutter is a high-speed power tool which can be used with different types of cutting attachments. Whether the tool is referred to as a "trimmer"

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or "brushcutter" depends on the type of cutting attachment affixed thereto. The term "trimmer" is used to designate an FS unit which is equipped with a nylon line head or a head with flexible plastic blades. The term "brushcutter" is used to designate an FS unit equipped with a rigid metal blade. Many FS models, including the subject FS 110 units, may be used as either a trimmer or brushcutter. The instruction manual details recommended use, limitations and cautions associated with use of the trimmer/brushcutter and its authorized accessories. At all times relevant to this litigation, the subject STIHL FS 110 trimmer/brushcutters were affixed with rigid metal blades and, as such, will be referred to as brushcutters.

- On or around January 5, 2006, Dana Larsen purchased a STIHL FS 110R1 11. brushcutter (serial number 264027780) from authorized STIHL dealer ORCHARD SERVICES.
- On or around May 23, 2008, David Phreaner purchased a STIHL FS 110R 12. brushcutter (serial number 271221375) from authorized STIHL dealer A-OK. (For ease of reference, the STIHL FS 110R brushcutter (serial number 264027780) and the STIHL FS 110R brushcutter (serial number 271221375) will hereinafter be referred to collectively as "the subject FS 110 units" or "the subject brushcutters".)
- On or around May 5, 2009, Santa Barbara residents Dana Larsen and Craig 13. Illestine set out to the Jesusita Trail for the purpose of clearing vegetation. Larsen and Illestine are two of many individuals who frequented the Jesusita Trail for mountain biking activities and were concerned regarding the safety hazards caused by overgrown vegetation on the trail. Larsen and Illestine cleared vegetation on the Jesusita Trail on an occasional basis; this was not their first time doing so. Their primary objective in clearing vegetation at the trail was hazard reduction, specifically, an attempt to clear vegetation at "blind corners" which obstructed the vision of trail users. By clearing vegetation, Larsen and Illestine were trying to make the trail safe for its users.
 - In order to clear vegetation from the Jesusita Trail, Larsen and Illestine each 14.

¹ FS models with an "R" on the nameplate, including the subject brushcutters, were originally configured at the time of distribution with a loop handle. Other than the loop handle, there is no differentiation between the FS 110R and other FS 110 brushcutters.

 equipped themselves with a STIHL FS 110 brushcutter. Larsen was using one he had purchased from Defendant ORCHARD SERVICES and Illestine was using the one Larsen had borrowed from David Phreaner (which Phreaner had purchased from Defendant A-OK). Larsen and Illestine began clearing brush at the Jesusita Trail at approximately 9:45 a.m. They did so for around two hours and left the area at approximately 11:45 a.m., after which they went to Larsen's home and ate lunch.

- 15. The subject FS 110 units which Larsen and Illestine used to clear vegetation at the Jesusita Trail on May 5, 2009 were both equipped with the STIHL "brush knife" cutting tool, a three-point metal blade. Pursuant to the instruction manual, when fitted to the FS 110 unit, the brush knife is suitable for applications ranging from cutting matted grass to clearing weeds, wild growth and scrub. While the instruction manual warned that contact with solid objects such as stones or rocks should be avoided to prevent *personal injury*, it did not contain any warnings or cautions regarding the potential for ignition due to spark production using the brush knife or any other rigid metal STIHL accessories.
- 16. Unbeknownst to Larsen and Illestine, the subject FS 110 units they were using to clear vegetation contacted rocks or other hard matter along or under the trail, causing hot sparks from the cutting edge of the blade to be emitted. The sparks in turn converted to embers in the brush along the trail's edge, not visible to Larsen and Illestine. The embers smoldered for some time until fire conditions evolved sufficient to facilitate and trigger combustion.
- 17. Neither Larsen nor Illestine had any knowledge regarding the presence of a fire nor the potential for subsequent combustion at the Jesusita Trail when they left the area at approximately 11:45 a.m. In fact, despite the presence of hikers on the trail both during and after the period of time Larsen and Illestine were clearing brush, a fire wasn't even reported until approximately 1:37 p.m. This fire, which eventually became known as the Jesusita Fire, burned nearly 9,000 acres and destroyed or damaged nearly 100 structures, including those belonging to Plaintiffs as listed above.
- 18. Neither Larsen nor Illestine had any knowledge of their involvement in the cause of the Jesusita Fire until they heard via the media that power tools were involved. The news that

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their STIHL power tools were was the cause of the fire came as quite a surprise to Larsen and Illestine; they had taken fire prevention precautions while clearing brush and had gone out of their way to avoid setting the brushcutters anywhere near combustible sources such as grass or brush. Furthermore, as far as Larsen was concerned, STIHL machines were superior to all other brands and the least likely to malfunction in any way which could pose a problem given the known risk of fire in the Santa Barbara area. Larsen and Illestine had/have tremendous respect for the Jesusita and Santa Barbara environment and surrounding communities and conducted themselves accordingly at all times.

- Detailed post-fire investigation into the cause of the fire revealed that the Jesusita 19. Fire was caused by a rock/blade interaction during vegetation clearance conducted by Larsen and Illestine. The type of blade attachment used by Larsen and Illestine, the "brush knife", produces sparks when it comes into contact with rocks or other hard matter along the trail. Larsen and Illestine used the STIHL brushcutters exactly as they were intended to be used by the manufacturer - cutting and clearing brush on rugged terrain, in this instance the Jesusita Trail.
- The potential for spark production and latent ignition of vegetation was confirmed 20. during testing of an identical brushcutter with the "brush knife" attachment. The testing also demonstrated the potential for a low-intensity, slow developing, incipient form of combustion and fire generation. The test was conducted by consultants at the request of the local District Attorney's office. The ignition achieved during the test resulted in very light smoke production with combustion and fire development triggered by wind. The test indicated that the combustion and ignition scenario which occurred after Larsen and Illestine had cleared vegetation at the Jesusita Trail could have occurred without alerting Larsen and Illestine while they were present, consistent with Larsen and Illestine's indication that they had no knowledge of a fire at the Jesusita Trail until well after they had left the area. ///

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION:

STRICT PRODUCTS LIABILITY -

FAILURE TO WARN

(Against Defendants STIHL, A-OK, ORCHARD SERVICES and Does 1-100)

- 21. Paragraphs 1 through 28 are incorporated by reference as if fully set forth in this cause of action.
 - 22. Defendant STIHL manufactured the subject FS 110 brushcutters.
- 23. Defendant A-OK sold the STIHL FS 110 brushcutter with serial number 271221375.
- 24. Defendant ORCHARD SERVICES sold the STIHL FS 110 brushcutter with serial number 264027780.
- 25. Use of the subject FS 110 units had a potential risk of low-intensity, slow developing incipient phase fire that was known and/or knowable by the use of industry knowledge available at the time of manufacture, distribution and sale.
- 26. The potential risk of a low-intensity, slow developing incipient phase fire presented a substantial danger to users of the subject brushcutters as well as to bystanders.
- 27. Ordinary consumers would not have recognized the potential risk of a low-intensity, slow developing incipient phase fire nor would ordinary consumers be on guard for such a fire which would not alert them of its presence on an immediate basis.
- 28. Defendants failed to warn or instruct of the potential fire risk. The use of a STIHL FS 110 brushcutter with a metal blade attachment (including the "brush knife") anywhere near a rock or ragged surface poses a risk of a spark-induced fire with a low-intensity, slow developing incipient phase of fire growth. Though STIHL's instruction manual warns of numerous potential dangers relative to the use of the FS 110 tool (there are 89 warnings throughout the manual including 12 specifically pertaining to the risk of fire), there are zero warnings in the manual nor on the brushcutters regarding the risk of fire as a result of a rugged terrain/metal blade interaction.
 - 29. Plaintiffs are bystanders who were harmed as a result of Larsen and Illestine using

the subject FS 110 units in a reasonably foreseeable way and as intended by the manufacturer. Larsen and Illestine were using the FS 110 brushcutters with "brush knife" attachments for the purpose of "clearing wild growth", as specifically contemplated by STIHL in its instruction manual for the FS 110 brushcutting tool. As a direct result thereof, Plaintiffs have suffered and will continue to suffer damages, including but not limited to damage to real and personal property, discomfort, annoyance, and emotional distress in an amount to be proven at trial.

30. The lack of sufficient warnings was a substantial factor in causing Plaintiffs' harm.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION:

NEGLIGENCE

(Against Defendants STIHL and Does 1-100)

- 31. Paragraphs 1 through 30 are incorporated by reference as if fully set forth in this cause of action.
- 32. Defendant STIHL manufactured the subject STIHL FS 110 brushcutters in a substandard manner as contemplated by *Civil Code* § 1714. STIHL was negligent. The STIHL FS 110 brushcutters were designed in a manner which caused slow developing ignition of vegetation while the brushcutters were being used in a reasonably foreseeable manner. STIHL failed to warn its customers about the risk of fire which could develop as a result of its customers use of its brushcutters in this reasonably foreseeable manner. The very feature that makes STIHL brushcutters so valuable and enticing to end-users presents an unreasonable and unacceptable risk of harm for which no warning was provided.
- 33. The negligence of Defendant STIHL was a substantial factor in causing Plaintiffs' damages.
- 34. As a result of the negligence of Defendant STIHL, Plaintiffs have suffered and will continue to suffer damages in an amount to be proven at trial.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray for damages as follows:

1. For Special Damages in amounts to be proven at time of trial;

- For General Damages in an amount to be proven at time of trial;
- For costs of suit;
- For such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

DATED: July 14, 2011

ENGSTROM, LIPSCOMB & LACK

BY:

DAVID CANNELL, et al.