TECHNICAL / MANAGEMENT RESOURCES 2

HOUSTON ONE STOP BUSINESS CENTER, P.O.Box 1562, Houston, Tx. 77251, Ph: 713-247-2982

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DEMOGRAPHIC OR STATISTICAL INFORMATION

BUREAU OF BUSINESS RESEARCH, Univ. of Texas Business School	512-471-1616
CITY OF HOUSTON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPT.	713-837-7701
GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP, Research Dept.	713-844-3600
HOUSTON CENTRAL LIBRARY, Telephone Reference Dept.	832-393-1313
	713-225-3385 TDD
HOUSTON DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT CORPORATION	713-650-3022
REGIONAL INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION EXCHANGE (RICE UNIV.)	713-528-3553
UH CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY	713-743-3970
UH SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER LIBRARY	713-752-8400

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE / SITES / FINANCING

CLEAR LAKE AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION	281-486-5535
FORT BEND CO. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL	281-242-0000
GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	713-844-3600
CENTERPOINT ENERGY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIVISION	713-207-1111
SOUTHEAST HARRIS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL	713-473-7777
PEARLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION	281-485-2411

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

AMERICAN ARBITRATION ASSOCIATION (Houston Regional Offices)	713-739-1302
DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTERS	713-755-8274
GULF COAST LEGAL FOUNDATION	713-652-0077
HARRIS COUNTY LAW LIBRARY	713-755-5183
HOUSTON BAR ASSOCIATION LEGAL LINE (Call for hours)	713-759-1133
LAWYERS REFERRAL SERVICE	713-237-9429
LEGAL HOTLINE FOR OLDER TEXANS (AARP)	800-622-2520
TEXAS ATTORNEY GENERAL, Consumer Protection Div.	713-223-5886
UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW LIBRARY	713-743-2300
VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM	713-228-0732

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, RESEARCH AND COUNSELING

CPA REFERRAL SERVICE	713-622-7733
CONSUMER CREDIT COUNSELING SERVICE	713-923-2227
GREATER HOUSTON CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU (incl. Houston Film Commission)	713-227-3100
HOUSTON ADVANCED RESEARCH CENTER	281-367-1348
MIT ENTERPRISE FORUM OF TEXAS	713-685-3961
SOCIETY OF THE PLASTICS INDUSTRY, INC. (Plastics Recycling Codes)	202-371-5200
TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT c-o Texas A&M	979-845-2907
TEXAS COMMISSION ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE HOTLINE	800-832-9623
TEXAS FILM COMMISSION (Office of the Governor)	512-463-9200
UNDERWRITERS LABORATORIES (Independent Product Testing)	708-272-8800
UNIFORM CODE COUNCIL, INC (UPC, UIC, EDI Code Assignment)	800-543-8137

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE AND FACILITIES

"BLACK'S GUIDE" (Office-Industrial Real Estate)	713-439-0271
PORT OF HOUSTON AUTHORITY	713-670-2400
HOUSTON ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS	713-629-1900

EMPLOYEE, CAREER RELATED SERVICES

CAREER & RECOVERY RESOURCES, INC. (Formerly VGS)	713-535-7100 713-535-7178 TDD
JOB TRAINING PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL	713-654-1919
SER- JOBS FOR PROGRESS	713-773-6000

PATENT, TRADEMARK, AND COPYRIGHT ASSISTANCE

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF COMPOSERS, AUTHORS & PUBLISHERS	800-505-4052
INVENTORS ASSOCIATION, HOUSTON	281-326-1795
NETWORK OF AMERICAN INVENTORS & ENTREPRENEURS (NAIE)	281-351-1316
RICE UNIVERSITY PATENT LIBRARY	713-523-2417
TEXAS MUSIC OFFICE (Governor's Office- Music Related Clearinghouse)	512-463-6666

PUBLICATIONS

30 REASONS NOT TO BUY OR START A BUSINESS (Book)	281-652-3937
BUSINESS AMERICA MAGAZINE (Magazine- monthly)	713-228-1187
BUSINESS WEEK (National Magazine- weekly)	800-635-1200
DAILY COURT REVIEW (Newspaper- daily)	713-869-5434
DIRECTORY OF TEXAS MANUFACTURERS (UT/Austin, annual)	888-212-4386
FORBES DIRECTORY (Directory of Houston associations and a monthly listing of business current events- "The Forbes Report")	713-524-0409
F.W. DODGE DIVISION- McGRAW HILL INFORMATION SYSTEMS	713-529-4895
HOUSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL (Newspaper- weekly)	713-688-8811
LATIN TRADE (Magazine- Bi-monthly)	800-799-6895
MINORITY SUPPLIER NEWS (Newspaper- seasonal)	212-944-2430
RESOURCE GUIDE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (Book)	800-544-2042
TEXAS HISPANIC BUSINESS JOURNAL (Newspaper- monthly)	800-846-4549
TEXAS REGISTER (Subscription, Rules & Regs. affecting businesses)	512-463-5561
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (National newspaper- daily)	800-841-8000 x848
YOUR TEXAS BUSINESS, 2nd Edition (Book)	713-529-4301
U.S. GOVERNMENT BOOKSTORE (Federal resource bookstore)	713-228-1187

NON-PROFIT ASSISTANCE

BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS FOR THE ARTS-HOUSTON, INC.	713-650-3189
EXECUTIVE SERVICE CORPS OF HOUSTON	713-780-2208
FUNDING SOURCE, UH GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK	713-743-8146
GRANTSMANSHIP CENTER (Los Angeles)	213-482-9860
GREATER HOUSTON WOMEN'S FOUNDATION	713-623-4493
NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (Los Angeles)	213-623-7080
TEXAS ACCOUNTANTS & LAWYERS FOR THE ARTS	713-526-4876
TEXAS SOCIETY OF CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS (TSCPA)	713-622-7733
TEXAS STATE COMPTROLLER STATE GRANTS HOTLINE	512-463-6678
FUNDING INFORMATION CENTER	817-334-0228
UNITED WAY MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (MAP) www.uwtgc.org	713-685-2787 713-685-2773 TDD
VOLUNTEER CENTER	713-965-0031

CREDIT REPORTING SERVICES (Call for fees)

EQUIFAX (www.equifax.com)	800-525-6285
TRANSUNION (www.tuc.com)	800-888-4213
EXPERIAN (www.experian.com)	888-397-3742

(GSP-08A.wpd, 7-05)

INTERNET RESOURCES

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The following is a list of websites of interest to small businesses. Most public libraries have internet terminals available for use, free of charge. All addresses are subject to change without notice.

HOUSTON CHRONICLE'S BUSINESS RESOURCE DATABASE:
www.chron.com/content/community/business/index.html

GOVERNMENT / RELATED AGENCIES	URL
U.S. BUSINESS ADVISOR	www.business.gov/busadv/index.cfm
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU	www.census.gov
U.S. BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS (Commerce)	www.bea.doc.gov
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (incl. Wage and Hour info)	www.dol.gov
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY	www.epa.gov
U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	www.sbaonline.sba.gov
U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE (Treasury Dept.)	www.customs.ustreas.gov
U.S. INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE	www.irs.gov/smallbiz/
U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRADE ADMINISTRATION	www.ita.doc.gov/
U.S. PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE	www.uspto.gov
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE	www.usps.com/smallbiz/
U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE	www.access.gpo.gov
TEXAS MARKETPLACE	www.marketplace.state.tx.us/
TEXAS STATE COMPTROLLER	www.cpa.state.tx.us
TEXAS ATTORNEY GENERAL (Consumer Protection)	www.oag.state.tx.us
DIRECTORY OF TEXAS MANUFACTURERS	www.utexas.edu/depts/bbr
TCEQ (formerly TNRCC)	www.tceq.state.tx.us
TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH	www.tdh.state.tx.us
HARRIS COUNTY	www.co.harris.tx.us
CITY OF HOUSTON	www.cityofhouston.gov/
HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY	www.hpl.lib.tx.us/hpl/index.html
METRO	www.ridemetro.org/homepage.asp
PORT OF HOUSTON	www.portofhouston.com

SEARCHES/RESEARCH/DEMOGRAPHICS	URL
GOOGLE	www.google.com
FORT WORTH BUSINESS ASSISTANCE CENTER	www.fwbac.com
THE PEOPLES' LAWYER	www.law.uh.edu/peopleslawyer
FRANCHISING INFORMATION	www.entrepreneur.com/franzone
U.S. GOVERNMENT SEARCH ENGINE	www.lib.lsu.edu/gov/fedgov.html
U.S. SENATE	www.senate.gov
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	www.house.gov
U.S. HOUSE INTERNET LAW LIBRARY	law.house.gov
HOTSHEET	www.hotsheet.com
INTERNIC DOMAIN REGISTRATION SYSTEM (URL'S)	www.internic.net/alpha.html
TEXAS STATE DATA CENTER	txsdc.tamu.edu/
UNDERWRITERS LABORATORIES STANDARDS	www.ul.com/info/standard.htm

LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT LAW	URL
STATE BAR OF TEXAS	www.texasbar.com/start.htm
FINDLAW LEGAL SEARCH ENGINE	www.findlaw.com/
LEGAL ENGINE.COM	www.legalengine.com/

HEIROS GAMOS LABOR LAW	www.hg.org/employ.html
LEGAL INFORMATION INSTITUTE	www.law.cornell.edu
ONLINE LAW LIBRARY	www.fplc.edu/ollie.htm
NOLO LEGAL ENCYCLOPEDIA	www.nolo.com/encyclopedia/index.html
WWW VIRTUAL LAW LIBRARY (Search)	www.law.indiana.edu/law/v-lib

BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS	URL
GREATER HOUSTON PARTNERSHIP	www.houston.org
HOUSTON MINORITY BUSINESS COUNCIL	www.hmbc.org
BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU	www.bbbhou.org
HOUSTON ENTREPRENEUR'S FORUM	www.4houston.com/hef
SILVER FOX ADVISORS	www.silverfox.org
CLEAR LAKE AREA EDF (CLAEDF)	www.claedf.com
CENTRAL HOUSTON INC.	www.centralhouston.org
DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT DISTRICT	www.downtowndistrict.org
MAIN STREET MARKET SQUARE REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY	www.mainstreettirz.com
MIDTOWN MANAGEMENT DISTRICT	www.houstonmidtown.com
GREATER EAST END DISTRICT	www.greatereastend.com

(GSP-8I.WPD, 9-04)

LEGAL BUSINESS STRUCTURES IN TEXAS

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The Filing Fee for Articles of Incorporation is $300. The Secretary of State (SOS) registers Corporate Names, Limited Partnerships, Limited Liability Companies, Certificate of Authority, Non-Profit Agencies, Statewide D.B.A's (name) and others. The legal structures for business available in Texas are as follows. ***Please note that the following information DOES NOT constitute legal advice.***

For more information: www.sos.state.tx.us/corp/businessfaqs.shtml

SOLE PROPRIETORSHIP

A sole proprietorship exists when a single individual operates a business owning all assets, is personally liable for all debts and business ownership is non-transferable. Under a sole proprietorship, the life of the proprietorship is limited to the life of the individual proprietor. The sole proprietorship makes no legal distinction between personal and business debts, and it does not require a separate income tax return.

GENERAL PARTNERSHIP

A general partnership exists when two or more individuals or businesses join to operate a business. Under the general partnership, a separate business entity exists, but creditors can still look to the partner's personal assets for satisfaction. General partners often share equally in assets and liabilities. The general partnership requires an annual partnership income tax return (separate from the partners' personal returns).

CORPORATION

A corporation is created when one or more individuals, partnerships or owners join together to form a separate entity for the purpose of operating a business in Texas. A corporation has its own legal identity, separate from its owners. The corporation safeguards the business owners' personal assets. Taxation of the corporation varies depending on the type of corporation formed- C Corporation or S Corporation. A C Corporation is often times taxed at a rate higher than an individual. The owners are not taxed personally for profits; however, the owners do pay personal taxes on any salaries and/or dividends and the corporation is also taxed on the dividends. Owners of an S Corporation may personally deduct losses the same as a partnership. The S Corporation also offers alternative methods for distributing the business income to the owners, and there is no added cost to the incorporation process.

LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY, LLC

A limited liability company is an unincorporated business entity which shares some of the aspects of S corporations and limited partnerships, and yet has more flexibility than some more traditional business entities. The limited liability company provides its owners with limited liability and pass-through tax advantages without the restrictions imposed on S corporations and limited partnerships.

LIMITED PARTNERSHIP

A limited partnership is a partnership formed by two or more persons or entities, and having one or more general partners and one or more limited partners. General partners share equality in debts and assets while limited partners have limited debt obligations.

REGISTERED LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP

A general partnership registered with the Secretary of State is a "registered limited liability partnership". A partner's liability in a registered limited partnership differs from that in an ordinary partnership. In a registered limited liability partnership, a partner is not individually liable, under some circumstances, for debts and obligations of the partnership arising from errors, omissions, negligence, incompetence, or malfeasance committed in the course of the partnership business by others in the partnership.

A professional tax consultant, accountant and/or attorney should be consulted before determining which legal structure best suits the requirements of the business and its owner(s). Once the legal structure of the business has been determined, the next step is to complete the necessary registration requirements.

REGISTERING A BUSINESS NAME IN TEXAS - State Requirements

All businesses operating as corporations in Texas must file articles of incorporation with the Office of the Secretary of State of Texas. If the corporation will transact business under names other than that stated in the articles of incorporation, the corporation needs to file an assumed name certificate with the Secretary of State, and with the county clerk in which the principal office and registered office of the corporation is located. The Secretary of State will perform a name search to verify that no other corporation in Texas is using the exact name selected. (This check is for corporate names only and does not include DBA filings.) To find out if a corporation is already using the name chosen, call the Secretary of State at 512-463-5555. Office personnel can do an immediate computer search to see if the name has been reserved.

Corporations, limited partnerships, and limited liability companies organized in other states or countries may transact business in Texas by obtaining a Certificate of Authority through the Secretary of State. The Corporation Section (Secretary of State) can provide forms for the certificate of authority. An out-of-state business may consider the option of creating a Texas corporation, limited partnership, or limited liability company for transaction of business in Texas.

Other forms of business entities required to file with the Secretary of State includes limited partnerships, registered limited liability partnerships, limited liability companies, professional corporation, professional associations and non-profit corporations. The Secretary of State provides a summary of the requirements for creation of these entities but does not provide forms for organizational documents except for registration of a limited liability partnership.

The Secretary of State publishes the *Filing Guide*, which offers guidelines for business organization document filing requirements. The Guide also includes administrative rules and sample forms promulgated by the Secretary of State. The current cost of the guide is $25 and may be purchased directly from the Secretary of State.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Office of the Secretary of State
Corporations Section
P.O. Box 13697
Austin, Texas 78711-3697

OR CALL:

General Information / Name Searches	512-463-5555 (Call before 9 a.m. or after 4 p.m.)
TDD	800/735-2989
FAX	512/463-5709
Copies and Certificates	512-463-5578
Trademarks	512-463-5576
Blank Filing Forms	512-463-5586
Corporate Legal Staff	512-463-5586
"Direct Access" for Business Regulation	512-475-2755 (Charge for On-line Service)
FORMS ONLINE:	www.sos.state.tx.us/corp/business.shtml

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TEXAS DECEPTIVE TRADE PRACTICES ACT

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TEXT AVAILABLE AT WEBSITES:
www.texasbar.com
library.law.smu.edu/resguide/dtpa.htm

What Is The "Deceptive Trade Practices Act"

The Texas Deceptive Trade Practices-Consumer Protection Act ("DTPA") was enacted on May 21, 1973. The full text can be found starting at section 17.41 of the Texas Business and Commerce Code. The primary purpose of the DTPA is to protect consumers against false, misleading, and deceptive business and insurance practices, unconscionable actions, and breaches of warranty. It does so by prohibiting certain acts and practices that tend to deceive
and mislead consumers.

The DTPA provides for both public enforcement and private remedies. Public enforcement is done by the Texas Attorney General, who can seek a court order prohibiting further deceptive practices. A private citizen may seek redress for damages caused by certain specific acts and practices listed in the DTPA. Because the DTPA is very broad and is constantly being interpreted by the courts, it is impossible to explain its complete meaning and impact in this short handbook. If you believe that you are the victim of a deceptive trade practice, please consult an attorney.

Which Transactions Does the DTPA Apply To?

Most consumer transactions are covered by the DTPA. Although the DTPA does not cover every deceptive or unconscionable act or practice, it is quite broad. The DTPA provides that "false, misleading, or deceptive acts or practices in the conduct of any trade or commerce are hereby declared unlawful."

The DTPA prohibits certain acts or practices "in the conduct of any trade or commerce." This is a very broad provision. "Trade and commerce" means "the advertising, offering for sale, lease, or distribution of any good or service, or any property, tangible or intangible, real, personal, or mixed, any other article, commodity, or thing of value wherever situated, and shall include any
trade or commerce directly or indirectly affecting the people of this state." The term "goods" includes tangible things or real property purchased or leased for use. The word "service" includes work, labor, or services purchased or leased for use, including services furnished in connection with the sale or repair of goods. The DTPA does not apply to the rendering of a professional service, the essence of which is the providing of advice, judgment, opinion or similar professional skill.

The term "unconscionable" appears frequently in the DTPA, and in this handbook. The DTPA defines an "unconscionable action" as one that "takes advantage of the lack of knowledge, ability, experience, or capacity of a person to a grossly unfair degree."

Who Is Entitled To Protection Under the DTPA?

Other than the Texas Attorney General, only consumers are allowed to file under the DTPA. The phrase "consumer" means an individual, partnership, corporation, or governmental entity who seeks or acquires by purchase or lease any goods or services. It does not cover a business consumer that has assets of $25 million or more or that is owned or controlled by a corporation or entity with assets of $25 million or more.

The Element of Knowledge or Intent

The DTPA makes many practices illegal without requiring proof that the defendant intended to do something

wrong or illegal. Unless the section involved requires otherwise, the consumer is not required to prove that the defendant ":intentionally" or "knowingly" violated the DTPA. This makes it easier to prove a violation of the DTPA, and provides a strong incentive for sellers of goods and providers of services to refrain from engaging in the prohibited acts and practices.

Nevertheless, the DTPA provides that if a defendant acts "intentionally," the judge or jury may award the consumer "additional damages" in an amount not exceeding three times the actual damages suffered by the consumer.

What Is Included Within the "Laundry List" of Acts and Practices Made Illegal by the DTPA?

The DTPA contains a "laundry list" of specific practices that are prohibited. This laundry list is found in section 17.46(b) of the Texas Business and Commerce Code. It contains 25 acts that violate the DTPA and for which consumers may sue, if the consumers relied on the act to their detriment. These twenty-five acts are described in the pamphlet and web pages referred to at the conclusion of this document.

What Remedies Are Available Under the DTPA?

The remedies of the DTPA are not exclusive. Instead, they are in addition to remedies provided in other laws. In fact, violations of certain other laws may also constitute violation of the DTPA. You may not, however, recover under the DTPA and under some other law for the same alleged wrong. In other words, you cannot recover twice for one violation.

Remedies under the DTPA may not usually be waived, and an attempt to make a consumer waive DTPA remedies is expressly made void and unenforceable unless specific requirements are met. This provision is particularly important when consumers buy goods "As Is." Often, consumers may still be able to recover under the DTPA even if the consumer buys the goods "As Is." If you have such a situation, you should seek the advice of an attorney.

For Further Assistance:

If you do not know an attorney to handle your case, ask a friend or an associate for a recommendation. Also, you may locate one through your local Lawyer Referral Service listed in your telephone directory, or through the State Bar Lawyer Referral Service by calling (toll free) 1-800-252-9690.

This information is not intended to be a substitute for the legal advice of a licensed attorney. If you have any questions regarding a particular issue or topic we suggest you seek legal counsel.

(GSP-07.WPD.WPD, 2-05)