

**IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE**

In re:

HAYES LEMMERZ INTERNATIONAL,
INC., et al.,

Reorganized Debtors.

Chapter 11

Case No. 01-11490 (MFW)

Jointly Administered

Related to Docket No. 3813

REORGANIZED DEBTORS' POST-TRIAL BRIEF

BARRIS, SOTT, DENN & DRIKER, P.L.L.C.
Stephen E. Glazek (admitted pro hac vice)
Thomas F. Cavalier (admitted pro hac vice)
Erica L. Fitzgerald (admitted pro hac vice)
211 West Fort Street, 15th Floor
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3281
Telephone: (313) 965-9725

- and -

ZUCKERMAN SPAEDER LLP
Thomas G. Macauley (I.D. No. 3411)
919 Market Street - Suite 990
Wilmington, Delaware 19801
Telephone: (302) 427-0400

Attorneys for Reorganized Debtors

Dated: March 17, 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page(s)</u>
INDEX OF AUTHORITIES	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
DISCUSSION	3
I. GECC’S BURDEN OF PROOF MUST BE STRICTLY ENFORCED.	3
II. GECC CANNOT RECOVER THE STIPULATED LOSS VALUES OF THE GROUP I MACHINES UNDER SECTION 365(d)(10).	4
A. The Limited Scope of Section 365(d)(10).	4
B. GECC Cannot Recover the SLV of any Group I Machine Pursuant to Section VIII of the Lease.	5
1. Twenty-Six Group I Machines Did Not Sustain a Casualty Occurrence During the Exposure Period Because They Were in Operating Condition.	7
a. Machine Nos. 1, 2, 12 and 14–19	8
b. Machine Nos. 25, 28, 30 and 35	10
c. Machine Nos. 37–43, 48	12
d. Machine Nos. 46 and 47	14
e. Machine Nos. 50 and 51	15
2. Fifteen Group I Machines that were not in Operating Condition upon their Return to GECC did not Sustain a Casualty Occurrence During the Exposure Period.	16
a. Machine No. 13	16
b. Machine Nos. 20–24, 26, 27, 29, 31–34 and	

c.	Machine Nos. 44 and 45	21
C.	GECC Cannot Recover the SLV of any Group I Machine under Section 365(d)(10) Pursuant to Section XII of the Lease.	21
1.	Payment of the SLV As a Remedy Is Not an “Obligation” Within the Meaning of §365(d)(10).	22
2.	GECC Is Not Entitled to the SLV as a Remedy for Default Because It Failed To Serve the Required Declaration and Notice on Hayes.	23
D.	GECC Did Not Prove that Hayes Breached its Maintenance and Return Obligations During the Exposure Period with Respect to the Group I Machines.	26
1.	Maintenance Provision.	27
2.	Return Provision	29
III.	THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SALE PRICE AND THE ORDERLY LIQUIDATION VALUE OR FAIR MARKET VALUE IS NOT PROBATIVE OF THE CONDITION OF THE MACHINE.31	
IV.	GECC IS NOT ENTITLED TO RECEIVE THE STIPULATED LOSS VALUES AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITY UNDER SECTION 365(d)(10) BECAUSE THEY ARE EXCESSIVE LIQUIDATED DAMAGES.	34
V.	GECC HAS FAILED TO PROVE THAT IT IS ENTITLED TO AN ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE UNDER SECTION 503(b)(1) FOR THE GROUP II MACHINES BASED ON HAYES’S ALLEGED TORTIOUS CONDUCT.....	36
	CONCLUSION	39

New Castle County v. Nat'l Union Fire Ins. Co., 243 F.3d 744 (3d Cir. 2001) 6

Reading Co. v. Brown, 391 U.S. 471 (1968) 37, 38

Roberts v. Fleet Bank, 342 F.3d 260 (3d Cir. 2003) 6

In re Pan American Airways Corp., 245 B.R. 897 (Bankr. S.D. Fla. 2000) 29

Singh v. Ashcroft, 383 F.3d 144 (3d Cir. 2004) 6

Southern Railway Co. v. Malone Freight Lines, Inc., 174 Ga. App. 405;
330 S.E.2d 371 (1985) 38

Statutes

11 U.S.C. §365(d)(10) *passim*

11 U.S.C. §502(a) 30

11 U.S.C. §503(b)(1) 3, 39

INTRODUCTION

After a five-day trial, nine live witnesses, and hundreds of exhibits, General Electric Capital Corporation (“GECC”) has utterly failed to prove its claims to an administrative expense based upon its equipment lease (“Lease”) with Reorganized Debtors Hayes Lemmerz International, Inc., and certain of its subsidiaries and affiliates (“Hayes”). GECC’s administrative claims, therefore, should be denied.

GECC asks this Court to award it, pursuant to 11 U.S.C. §365(d)(10), the Stipulated Loss Value (“SLV”) of forty-one of the fifty machines listed on rejected Lease Schedules, a claim that amounts to \$6.1 million. To obtain that extraordinary relief, GECC asserts two theories.

First, it alleges that each of these forty-one machines (which GECC calls the “Group I Machines”) sustained a “Casualty Occurrence” as defined in the Lease, thereby permitting it to recover the SLVs under Section VIII of the Lease. To prove that each of the Group I Machines sustained a Casualty Occurrence, GECC must establish that each machine was “irreparably damaged”, “permanently rendered unfit for use” or “worn out”. Furthermore, it must prove that the machine first got into that condition from or after the sixtieth day after the Petition Date and before the applicable rejection date.

GECC barely tried to prove a Casualty Occurrence, let alone that any such event took place during the requisite time period. It offered not a single live witness with personal knowledge of the condition of the machines. Its expert reviewed not a single inspection report, deposition or any other document revealing the condition of the machines. All it came up with were the sales prices, received largely from dealers, and a \$1,900 appraisal that used only two comparables for fifty machines. Indeed, GECC did not even have inspection

reports for half of the machines; and it had no marketing materials and no documentation of asking prices or quotes.

It is then no wonder that Hayes's proofs eviscerated GECC's case. In stark contrast to GECC, Hayes presented testimony live and by deposition of witnesses with hands-on, day-to-day knowledge of the machines; and it presented an expert who reviewed all of the inspection reports and all of the depositions of witnesses with personal knowledge of the machines' condition. That testimony proved that nearly two-thirds of the Group I Machines were in operating condition when they were returned to GECC, making it inconceivable that they had sustained a Casualty Occurrence. Although the remaining Group I Machines were not operable upon their return because they were missing parts, both Hayes's expert, Frederick Kucklick, and its lay witnesses testified that missing parts is a repairable condition. *This testimony stands un rebutted.*

GECC's other theory to recover the SLV asserts that Hayes "defaulted" on the Lease by failing to comply with its maintenance and return provisions, thereby entitling GECC to recover the SLV as a default remedy under Section XII of the Lease. This theory is a belated afterthought of GECC — there is barely a whisper of it in GECC's two applications. GECC pushed this theory to center stage in its Pre-Trial Brief, realizing the weakness of its Casualty Occurrence claim, a claim that included dozens of indisputably operable machines.

But its new theory affords GECC no relief. Before GECC can recover the SLV as a default remedy, it must give Hayes a written declaration of default after notice of the specific breach and thirty days to cure it. As notice, GECC can point only to its objections to Hayes's rejection motions. But they were inadequate notice since they failed to identify a single machine that lacked maintenance and the specific repair that Hayes failed to provide.

Furthermore, there is no evidence whatsoever of a separate declaration of default.

Even if GECC cleared the declaration and notice hurdles (which it did not), it stumbled on the remaining barriers to securing its default remedy. It failed to show that Hayes actually breached its maintenance and return obligations during the requisite time period. As indicated above, Hayes returned nearly two-thirds of the Group I Machines in operating condition. Other machines were returned with some parts missing; but there is no evidence that the parts were removed from these machines during the prescribed period.

The claim that Hayes breached the return obligation also fails. GECC restricts this claim to the three machines whose base lease terms expired prior to rejection. After such expiration, however, the Lease continued month-to-month, ending only upon rejection. Thus, the time for Hayes to perform its return obligation arose only upon rejection, giving rise only to rejection damages, which cannot form the basis of an administrative claim.

Finally, GECC asserts only a 11 U.S.C. §503(b)(1) claim regarding Machine Nos. 3–11 (which GECC calls the “Group II Machines”). GECC contends that Hayes committed a tort by taking parts from this equipment. Tort damages are recoverable under §503(b)(1) only if the tort took place in the course of the debtor’s business. Here, the evidence is that all parts were removed from the Group II Machines *before* the Petition Date. Thus, GECC’s §503(b)(1) claims fails.

DISCUSSION

I. GECC’S BURDEN OF PROOF MUST BE STRICTLY ENFORCED.

GECC has the burden of proof on its administrative expense claims. *In re Lason, Inc.*, 314 B.R. 296 (Bankr. D. Del. 2004), citing *In re Smith Corona Corp.*, 210 B.R. 243, 245 (Bankr. D. Del. 1997). This burden is strictly enforced. “Given the purpose of administrative expenses and the effect that their allowance has on the general creditors,”

courts should not “speculate” in the absence of sufficient evidence of an entitlement to an administrative expense. *In re Patient Educ. Media*, 221 B.R. 97, 104 n.7 (Bankr. S.D.N.Y. 1998). As one other court has said, “The allowance of an administrative claim should not be an exercise in conjecture.” *In re Kmart Corp.*, 290 B.R. 614, 622 (Bankr. N.D. Ill. 2003). As detailed below, GECC has failed to meet its burden of proof on its administrative claims.

II. GECC CANNOT RECOVER THE STIPULATED LOSS VALUES OF THE GROUP I MACHINES UNDER SECTION 365(d)(10).

GECC contends that it is entitled to recover the SLVs of the Group I Machines (Machine Nos. 1, 2, 12–48, 50 and 51) pursuant to Section 365(d)(10) under Sections VIII and XII of the Lease.¹ Under Section VIII, GECC says, Hayes must pay the SLVs of the Group I Machines because each machine sustained a “Casualty Occurrence” as that term is defined in the Lease. GECC claims that Section XII authorizes payment of the SLVs as a default remedy because Hayes defaulted on its maintenance and return obligations. As demonstrated below, GECC may not recover the SLVs pursuant to §365(d)(10) under either Lease provision.

A. The Limited Scope of Section 365(d)(10).

The scope of §365(d)(10) is limited in determining a debtor’s administrative liability for breach of a personal property lease. Section 365(d)(10) provides in relevant part as follows:

The trustee shall timely perform all of the obligations of the debtor . . . first arising from or after 60 days after the order for

¹The SLVs proposed by GECC in Ex. M-264A were incorrectly calculated. GECC calculated the underlying rental periods incorrectly, resulting in rental periods that are one month lower than the correct period. A lower rental period means a higher SLV. The correct total is \$6,059,944.04 as demonstrated in Exhibit A. This total agrees with the amounts set forth in GECC’s applications.

relief in a case under chapter 11 of this title under an unexpired lease of personal property . . . until such lease is assumed or rejected notwithstanding section 503(b)(1) of this title.

In *In re Muma Services*, 279 B.R. 478, 487 (Bankr. D. Del. 2002), this Court denied many of the claimed expenses for breach of the equipment lease, holding that §365(d)(10) requires timely payment of a lease obligation only “to the extent that obligations arise after the sixtieth day of [the] case and prior to rejection” of the lease. Accordingly, to recover the SLV as a §365(d)(10) expense, GECC must establish that Hayes’s obligation to pay the SLV under Section VIII or that its breach of its maintenance and return obligations first occurred on or after the sixtieth day following the December 5, 2001 Petition Date — which is February 3, 2002— and before the applicable Lease Schedule rejection date (“Exposure Period”).

B. GECC Cannot Recover the SLV of any Group I Machine Pursuant to Section VIII of the Lease.

To show that it is entitled to the SLVs as a §365(d)(10) expense for the breach of Section VIII, GECC must establish two things: (1) that each Group I Machine suffered a “Casualty Occurrence”, and (2) that its right to payment of the SLV under Section VIII first arose during the Exposure Period. It has failed to meet its burden on both elements.

“Casualty Occurrence” is a defined term in the Lease. In the context of this matter, it occurs only if equipment “shall be or become worn out, . . . irreparably damaged in the reasonable determination of Lessee, or permanently rendered unfit for use” (Lease, §VIII). Thus, GECC must show that each Group I Machine became “worn out,” “irreparably damaged in the reasonable determination of Lessee,” or “permanently rendered unfit for use.”

GECC has tried to ease its burden in establishing a Casualty Occurrence by asserting

In addition to proving a Casualty Occurrence, GECC must establish that Hayes’s obligation to pay the SLV under Section VIII first arose during the Exposure Period. Any such obligation could arise only *after* that machine had sustained a Casualty Occurrence: “On the rental payment date *next succeeding a Casualty Occurrence* (the “Payment Date”), Lessee shall pay Lessor the sum of [the SLV plus any unpaid rent].” (Lease, §VIII; emphasis supplied.) Thus, GECC must prove that a Casualty Occurrence took place that resulted in a Payment Date during the Exposure Period.

GECC has not met its two-fold burden. Nearly two-thirds of the Group I Machines sustained no Casualty Occurrence at all because they were in operable condition on the applicable rejection date as well as at the time that they were returned to GECC. Any deficiencies in the remaining Group I Machines do not amount to a Casualty Occurrence since these machines could be restored to operating condition. Furthermore, there is no evidence that they got into a state of disrepair during the Exposure Period.

1. Twenty-Six Group I Machines Did Not Sustain a Casualty Occurrence During the Exposure Period Because They Were in Operating Condition.

Twenty-six Group I Machines were in operating condition on the Petition Date, the applicable rejection date as well as on the date of their return to GECC. Machine Nos. 1, 2, 14–19, 25, 28, 30, 35, 37–43, 46–48, 50 and 51⁴ are in this category.⁵ These machines were in operating condition throughout the Exposure Period. As Hayes’s expert stated in his report and testimony, operable machines did not become irreparably damaged, permanently

⁴ The “Machine List” attached to the Joint Pretrial Stipulation, which identifies the machines by their assigned machine numbers, is appended to this brief as Exhibit B.

⁵ The one exception is Machine No. 17, which was in operating condition on its rejection date, but not on its return date.

rejected on February 14, 2002, just ten days after the opening of the Exposure Period. (DF 20, 21.) Machine No. 2 was in operating condition on the Petition Date. (DF 25 .) It was inspected on March 21, 2002, five weeks after the rejection date. (DF 24.) Nothing in the inspection report suggests that the machine was inoperable. (DF 24 .) Machine No. 2 remained operational up until its return to GECC. (DF 26 .) Thus, Machine No. 2 was operational throughout the Exposure Period. (DF 28.)

Machine No. 12: This Niigata drill was listed on Schedule 59, which was rejected on April 3, 2002. (DF 55, 56) It was operational on the Petition Date. (DF 58) At the time of its removal from the Gainesville facility, Machine No. 12 was approaching the time that it needed a motor replacement; nevertheless, it remained operational. (DF 64 .) Thus, Machine No. 12 was operational throughout the Exposure Period. (DF 66.)

Machine Nos. 14 and 15: These two Niigata drills were listed on Schedule 47 as amended by Schedule 97, which was rejected on May 12, 2003. (DF 67, 68, 76, 77) These machines were running in production on the Petition Date and when they were inspected on September 4, 2002. (DF 71, 72, 80, 81) GECC sold these machines to Rank International, a used machinery dealer. (DF 73, 82) Rank then re-sold them to Hayes for double the price. (DF 74, 83.) Machine Nos. 14 and 15 never left the Gainesville facility and have been continuously running in production there since the Petition Date. (DF 74, 75, 83, 84.)

Machine No. 16: This Okuma and Howa lathe was listed on Schedule 43 as amended by Schedule 98, which was rejected on February 28, 2003. (DF 85, 86 .) The machine was in production on the Petition Date and when it was inspected on September 4, 2002. (DF 88, 89.) It was in operating condition when it was returned to GECC. (DF 90) Thus, Machine No. 16 was in operating condition throughout the Exposure Period. (DF 93.)

Machine No. 17: This Okuma and Howa lathe was listed on Schedule 41 as amended by Schedule 102, which was rejected on March 24, 2003. (DF 94, 95.) Machine No. 17 was in production on the Petition Date, during its September 4, 2002 inspection, and on its rejection date. (DF 97, 98, 100.) After the rejection date, the machine's transformer was damaged, rendering the machine inoperable. (DF 101.) However, the transformer was replaceable for a cost of \$1,000. (DF 102.) Thus, Machine No. 17 was operating through the Exposure Period and sustained damage at a later time that was repairable. (DF 104.)

Machine No. 18: This is another Okuma and Howa lathe that was listed on Schedule 41 as amended by Schedule 102. (DF 105.) Machine No. 18 was in production on the Petition Date, during its September 4, 2002 inspection, on the rejection date and when the machine was returned to GECC. (DF 108, 111, 112.) Thus, Machine No. 18 was in operating condition during the Exposure Period. (DF 114.)

Machine No. 19: This Okuma and Howa lathe was also listed on Schedule 41 as amended by Schedule 102. (DF 115.) Machine No. 19 was operating on the Petition Date, at its September 4, 2002 inspection, and when it was returned to GECC. (DF 118, 120, 122) Thus, this machine was in operating condition throughout the Exposure Period. (DF 124.)

b. Machine Nos. 25, 28, 30 and 35

These machines were located at Hayes's LaMirada, California facility. The evidence of the condition of these and the other machines at LaMirada consists of the live testimony of José Almeida, the day-shift team leader; the depositions of Thomas Bressler, Facilities Manager and Geoffrey Horsfield, the plant's Controller; LaMirada's maintenance records; Hayes's interrogatory answers; various inspection reports; and the deposition testimony of Russell Maynard, an inspector. This evidence proves that Machine Nos. 25, 28, 30 and 35

were in operating condition throughout the Exposure Period.

Machine No. 25: This Okuma lathe was listed on Schedule 31, which was rejected on July 19, 2002. (DF 189, 190.) Almeida testified that this machine was in operating condition on the Petition Date. (DF 193 .) The maintenance records show that it was operating on March 13, 2002. (DF 194.) Almeida also testified that Machine No. 25 was in operating condition when it was removed from the LaMirada facility. (DF 196.) There was no inspection report on this machine, and GECC offered no evidence rebutting Hayes's proofs. (DF 191.) Thus, Machine No. 25 was in operating condition throughout the Exposure Period. (DF 198.)

Machine No. 28: This Okuma lathe was listed on Schedule 34. The base term of Schedule 34 expired on February 14, 2003, and the Schedule was rejected on June 13, 2003. (DF 220, 221.) Almeida testified that Machine No. 28 was in operating condition on the Petition Date and upon its removal from the plant. (DF 224, 227 .) The machine was inspected on July 9, 2003. Although the inspection report noted various problems with the machine, the inspector testified that he made no determination that any such problem rendered the machine inoperable. (DF 231 .) The inspection report indicates that the machine could be restored as a "roughing" machine, which was in fact the role that it performed at LaMirada. (DF 230.) Thus, Machine No. 28 was in operating condition throughout the Exposure Period. (DF 229.)

Machine No. 30: This Emco drill was listed on Schedule 35, which was rejected on February 14, 2002, just ten days after the opening of the Exposure Period. (DF 245, 246.) Almeida testified that Machine No. 30 was operational on the Petition Date and that, according to the repair records, it was in production after March 24, 2002. (DF 249, 250.)

The inspection report confirms that the machine was “running in cell” on the date of the inspection, May 7, 2002, several months after the rejection date. (DF 251 .) Further, this machine was in operating condition when it was removed from LaMirada. (DF 253) Thus, Machine No. 30 was in operating condition during the ten-day Exposure Period. (DF 255.)

Machine No. 35: This is an Okuma lathe that was listed on Schedule 62, which was rejected on July 19, 2002. (DF 296, 297.) Almeida testified that Machine No. 35 was operating on the Petition Date. (DF 300.) The repair records show that it was operating on March 23, 2002. (DF 301.) The machine was inspected on August 23, 2002, five weeks after the rejection date. Nothing in the report suggests that the machine was inoperable; indeed, it shows that the machine was under power when it was inspected. (DF 302 .) Finally, this machine was operable when it was removed from the LaMirada facility. (DF 304.) Thus, Machine No. 35 was in operating condition throughout the Exposure Period. (DF 306.)

c. **Machine Nos. 37–43, 48**

These machines were located at the Hayes’s Somerset, Kentucky facility. Machine Nos. 37–43 were on Schedule 92, which was rejected on March 2, 2002, creating a 26-day Exposure Period. (DF 324, 325.) Machine No. 48 was on Schedule 32, which was rejected on March 7, 2002, creating a 31-day Exposure Period. (DF 376, 377.) The evidence concerning the condition of these and the other machines at Somerset consisted of the live testimony of Martin Asberry, the plant’s facilities manager; various inspection reports; and the deposition testimony of the inspector, Lawrence Lundquist. This evidence proves that these machines were in operating condition throughout the Exposure Periods, which lasted less than five weeks.

(DF 360.)

Machine No. 48: This machine is a Motch lathe that was moved to Somerset from the Huntington, Indiana plant in late 2000. (DF 379.) The lathe was not used in production at Somerset; rather, it was operated as a stand-alone machine performing the flange cut. (DF 379.) It was not used after the Petition Date. (DF 381 .) On that date, however, it was in operating condition and it was in the same condition upon its removal from Somerset. (DF 380, 383.) There is no inspection report on this machine. (DF 378.) Thus, Machine No. 48 was in operating condition during the Exposure Period. (DF 386.)

d. Machine Nos. 46 and 47

These are two Motch lathes that were located at the Huntington facility. The evidence of their conditions consists of the deposition testimony of Larry Kissinger, the Huntington maintenance supervisor; Huntington's maintenance and repair records; Hayes's interrogatory answers; an inspection report; and the deposition testimony of the inspector, Dwight Lanman. This evidence proves that Machine Nos. 46 and 47 were in operating condition during the Exposure Period.

Machine No. 46: This Motch was listed on Schedule 83. The base term of this Schedule expired on October 15, 2002. (DF 412, 413) The machine was sold by GECC on January 31, 2003. (DF 420.) Schedule 83 was rejected on June 13, 2003. (DF 413.) The repair records indicate that the machine was running in production on the Petition Date. (DF 416.) It continued to be used in production until November 15, 2002, when it was prepared for removal from the plant. (DF 418) The lathe was inspected on January 28, 2003, merely three days before it was sold by GECC. Nothing in the inspection report suggests that the machine is inoperable. (DF 419.) Moreover, there is no evidence of any damage to the

b. **Machine Nos. 20–24, 26, 27, 29, 31–34 and 36**

These machines were located at the LaMirada plant. Each machine was missing some parts upon its removal from LaMirada. Both Almeida and Kucklick testified that replacing the parts would have restored the machines to operating condition. In addition, there is no evidence that the parts were removed during the Exposure Period. Thus, these machines did not sustain a Casualty Occurrence or, even if they did, that event did not occur during the Exposure Period.

Machine No. 20: This Okuma LAW-S lathe was listed on Schedule 30, which was rejected on July 19, 2002. (DF 135, 136.) Almeida testified that this machine was missing some guards and an input shaft from the headstock when it was removed from the plant. (DF 143.) There is no inspection report on this machine nor other evidence of its condition upon removal. (DF 137.) Almeida further testified that this machine, like the others at LaMirada that lacked parts, would have operated if the missing parts had been replaced, a conclusion confirmed by Kucklick. (DF 145 .) Consequently, Machine No. 20 was not irreparably damaged, permanently rendered unfit for use or worn out. Moreover, even if it were in such a condition when it left LaMirada, there is no evidence that the guards and input shaft were removed during the Exposure Period. (DF 144.)

Machine No. 21: This Okuma LAW-S lathe was listed on Schedule 30. (DF 146.) Repair records show that the machine was operating in production as late as February 25, 2002. (DF 150) Almeida testified that this lathe lacked some unspecified small parts when it was removed from the LaMirada facility. (DF 153.) There is no inspection report for this machine nor other testimony about its condition. (DF 148.) There is no evidence that the parts were removed between February 25, 2002, and the close of the Exposure Period on July

19, 2002. (DF 154, 155.)

Machine No. 22: This is another Okuma LAW-S lathe that was listed on Schedule 30. (DF 156, 157.) Repair records show that Machine No. 22 was in production on March 23, 2002. (DF 161.) Almeida testified that there were some unspecified parts missing from this machine when it was returned to GECC. (DF 164) There is no inspection report on this machine or any other testimony about its condition. (DF 158) There is no evidence that the parts were removed between March 23, 2002, and the close of the Exposure Period on July 19, 2002. (DF 165, 166.)

Machine No. 23: This Okuma LB35 lathe was listed on Schedule 31, which was rejected on July 19, 2002. (DF 166, 167.) Almeida testified that this machine was missing a spindle drive when it was removed from the plant. (DF 175.) There is no inspection report on this machine nor other evidence of its condition. (DF 169.) There is no evidence that the spindle drive was removed within the Exposure Period. (DF 176, 177.)

Machine No. 24: This is another Okuma LB35 lathe that was listed on Schedule 31. (DF 178, 179.) Repair records show that this machine was in production on March 23, 2002. (DF 183.) Almeida testified that this machine was taken out of production in May or June 2002. (DF 184.) He also testified that, when this machine was returned to GECC, it was missing certain unspecified parts. (DF 186.) There is no inspection report on this machine and no other testimony about its condition. (DF 180.) Almeida could not recall when the parts were removed, and there is no evidence that they were removed between May or June 2002 and the close of the Exposure Period on July 19, 2002. (DF 187, 188.)

Machine No. 26: This is another Okuma LB35 lathe that is listed on Schedule 31. (DF 199, 200.) Repair records show that it was in production on March 18, 2002. (DF 204

Almeida testified that unspecified small parts were missing from the machine when it was removed from LaMirada. (DF 207.) There is no inspection report on this machine or other testimony about its condition. (DF 201.) There is no evidence that the parts were removed between March 18, 2002, and the close of the Exposure Period on July 19, 2002. (DF 208, 209.)

Machine No. 27: This is another Okuma LB35 lathe that was listed on Schedule 31. (DF 210, 211.) Repair records show that it was operating on February 15, 2002. (DF 215) Almeida testified that this machine was missing some unspecified parts when it was removed from LaMirada. (DF 218 .) There is no inspection report on this machine and no other testimony about its condition. (DF 212.) There is no evidence that these parts were removed between February 15, 2002, and the close of the Exposure Period on July 19, 2002. (DF218, 219.)

Machine No. 29: This Okuma LB35 lathe was listed on Schedule 34. The base term of Schedule 34 expired on February 14, 2003, and the Schedule was rejected on June 13, 2003. (DF 232, 233.) This machine was inspected on July 9, 2003, nearly one month after its rejection. (DF 242) The only part identified by the report as missing was guarding. (DF 242.) Kucklick testified that guarding can be replaced. (DF 242) The report identified rust on various components of the machine. Kucklick testified that the rust can be removed and explained how it is done. (DF 242 .) The inspector conceded that Machine No. 29 “technically . . . could have been restored.” (DF 243, 244.)

Machine No. 31: This is an Emco drill that was listed on Schedule 37, which was rejected on July 19, 2002. (DF 256, 257 .) Repair records show that this machine was in production as late as March 24, 2002. (DF 261.) This machine was inspected on February

24, 2003. (DF 265.) The report states that the doors and covers are damaged, the controller is not functional, and that the spindle unit and tool changer are missing. (DF 265) Kucklick testified that doors and covers can be repaired and that the controller, spindle and tool changer are replaceable parts. (DF 265.) The inspection was done nine months after the rejection date. There is no evidence that the machine got into the described condition between March 24, 2002, which is the last known date of operation, and the close of the Exposure Period on July 19, 2002. (DF 263, 266.)

Machine No. 32: This Emco drill was listed on Schedule 48, which was rejected on July 19, 2002. (DF 267, 268 .) Repair records show that the machine was operating on February 5, 2002. (DF 272.) The machine was inspected on February 24, 2003. (DF 276) The report shows that it was missing various parts, all of which are replaceable. (DF 276.) The inspection was done nine months after the rejection date. There is no evidence that the machine got into the described condition before the rejection date. (DF 275, 277.)

Machine No. 33: This Emco drill was listed on Schedule 48. (DF 278, 279.) Repair records show that this machine was in production on March 12, 2002. (DF 283 .) This machine was inspected on February 24, 2003. (DF 286.) The report shows that the machine was missing various parts, all of which are replaceable. (*Id.*) There is no evidence the machine got into this condition between March 12, 2002, the last known date of production, and July 19, 2002. (DF 286, 287.)

Machine No. 34: This Emco drill was listed on Schedule 62, which was rejected on July 19, 2002. (DF 288, 289) This machine was taken out of production before the Petition Date. (DF 292.) A couple of drives were removed post-petition. (DF 293) However, the August 23, 2002 inspection report does not mention that any drives are missing. (DF 293.)

above, GECC may recover the SLV as a remedy only if it declares a default in writing after giving Hayes written notice of the breached obligation and an opportunity to cure the breach. GECC simply did not fulfill those conditions.

Initially, the automatic stay did not prevent GECC from serving a notice of default. A default notice is permitted if it is not used to obtain possession of the debtor's property.

[T]he automatic stay of Section 362 prevents any act to obtain possession of the property of the estate. Does this include the giving of notices of default? The answer is that *so long as there is no attempt to obtain possession a notice may be given to alert a debtor lessee of breach of the terms of the lease.*

In re Sixteen to One Mining Corp., 9 B.R. 636, 638 (Bankr. D. Nev. 1981) (emphasis added).¹⁰ Here, the remedy that is conditioned on the declaration and notice of default is payment of the SLV, not obtaining possession of the machines. Thus, the required declaration and notice of default were not prohibited by the automatic stay.

GECC did not give Hayes written notice that it breached its maintenance or return obligations and did not give it an opportunity to cure the alleged breach. Unquestionably, GECC itself did not serve a notice of default on Hayes. Lawrence Kovacs, the GECC manager responsible for the Hayes account, admitted that GECC did not send a notice of default to Hayes. (DF 498.) Indeed, GECC has a policy prohibiting the sending of notices of default to customers in bankruptcy, apparently leaving that task to its outside counsel.

¹⁰*Accord LTV Corp. v. Gulf States Steel, Inc.*, 969 F.2d 1050, 1059 (D.C. Cir. 1992) (automatic stay did not prevent service of notice of claim required to trigger indemnification obligation); *Am-Haul Carting, Inc. v. Contractors Casualty and Surety Co.*, 33 F.Supp. 2d 235, 242 (S.D.N.Y. 1998) (automatic stay did not preclude general contractor from serving on debtor subcontractor notice of default that was required to trigger surety's obligation on performance bond. The court held that there was "no reason why the default notice should be prohibited" since "[i]n the case before us there has been no attempt by [the general contractor] to obtain possession of the property of the debtor.")

(DF 498.)

GECC argues that its counsel gave Hayes the required notice in the form of various papers they filed with this Court throughout the bankruptcy. In response to Hayes's Motion for Partial Summary Judgment, GECC only pointed to Paragraph 15 of its Objection to Debtors' Second Motion for Order Authorizing Rejection of Executory Contracts, which states that GECC "believes" that every machine on sixty-one schedules has not been maintained and serviced in accordance with the Lease provisions. (DF 501.) GECC has now offered into evidence two additional responses to rejection motions filed by Hayes during the Chapter 11 cases. One of these contains the same language and the other refers to GECC's continuing objections about compliance with the maintenance and return provisions. (DF 504, 507.) The three filings discussed above will be referred to collectively as the "Responses."¹¹

The Responses are not notices of default. "Given the consequences that follow a declaration of default, it is *vital* that the declaration be made in terms sufficiently *clear, direct and unequivocal* to inform the breaching party that it has defaulted on its obligations." *Central Louisiana Electric Co., Inc. v. Dolet Hills Mining Venture*, 116 F. Supp. 2d 726, 738 (W.D. La. 2000) (first emphasis in original). The Responses merely state that GECC "believes" that every machine on sixty-one schedules (most of which are not in dispute here) has been poorly maintained and serviced. (DF 501.) Thus, none of the Responses "clearly, directly or unequivocally" notified Hayes that it breached the Lease or is in default.

¹¹ GE offered into evidence two additional pleadings filed in response to later Hayes rejection motions. These responses, however, state only that any rejection order should preserve GECC's ability to apply for an administrative expense priority based on Hayes's compliance with the return and maintenance provisions of the Lease. (DF 510, 513.) Nothing in these pleadings even vaguely suggests that Hayes has not complied with its return and maintenance obligations.

Furthermore, none of the Responses gave Hayes any of the information needed to cure any asserted default. “Inherent in the opportunity to cure a default is knowledge of what is in default. *Absent knowledge of what must be corrected in order to avoid the specified penalty, the right to cure the default becomes a meaningless guessing game.*” *In re Valley View Shopping Center, L.P.*, 233 B.R. 120, 124 (Bankr. D. Kan. 1999) quoting *Gallagher v. Borden, Inc.*, 616 N.E.2d 577 (Ohio App. 1992) (emphasis supplied). GECC’s Responses do not describe with any particularity the maintenance that was required nor any specific machine that required it. Without such information, Hayes did not have a meaningful opportunity to cure any alleged breach.

Finally, after giving a notice of default and thirty days to cure, GECC must provide Hayes with a separate written *declaration* of default. There is no evidence of any such declaration.

Since GECC failed to give Hayes any written notice of breach, opportunity to cure, or written declaration of default, it may not recover the SLV as a default remedy under the express terms of Section XII.

D. GECC Did Not Prove that Hayes Breached its Maintenance and Return Obligations During the Exposure Period with Respect to the Group I Machines.

Even if GECC had proven that it gave Hayes the required declaration and notice of default, which it did not, it would still be required under §365(d)(10) to establish that Hayes breached its maintenance and return obligations during the Exposure Period. GECC has failed to submit such proof.¹²

¹²For the same reason, GECC cannot recover actual damages for the breach of these obligations as a §365(d)(10) expense. To obtain that relief, it would have to show that the breaches
(continued...)

(and was) no proof of Hayes's failure to perform such maintenance. Indeed, the evidence proves that Hayes provided the machines with appropriate maintenance.

- Preventive maintenance programs established by the manufacturer's representatives were set up and followed at LaMirada, Somerset, Howell and Huntington. (DF 127–134, 315–320, 417, 427, 432, and 433.) Preventive maintenance programs were also in place at Sedalia and Gainesville. (DF 38, 398.) Preventive maintenance included daily, quarterly and semi-annual servicing. (*See, e.g.*, DF 128-130, 316–318.) Asberry and Almeida testified that, at their facilities, chips were removed between one and three times in an eight-hour shift. (DF 128, 318.)
- Although automobile parts suppliers generally operate “24/7”, Hayes typically operated its plants 24 hours per day, five days each week. (*See, e.g.*, DF 4, 126, 321.) There is no evidence that Hayes's plants were consistently operated on a “24/7” schedule, as GECC contends.
- When the machines were moved within a facility or to an offsite storage location, professional riggers were used. (*See, e.g.*, DF 13, 141, 399, 443.) Machines located outside were tarped to protect them from the weather. (*See, e.g.*, 141, 399.)

This consistent maintenance resulted in nearly two-thirds of the Group I Machines being in good operating order, repair, condition and appearance when they were returned to GECC. Machine Nos. 14, 15, 25, 28, 30, 35, 37–43, 46–48, 50 and 51 were in operating condition and required no repair whatsoever at the time that they were returned to GECC.¹⁴ (*See* Part II.B.1, *supra.*) Other operable machines (Nos. 1, 2, 16, 18 and 19) required repair to or replacement of either the slides, covers, doors, motor or chip augur. But there is no evidence that these conditions were caused by a failure to maintain these machines during the Exposure Period in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations rather than

¹⁴Machine Nos. 37–43 were located at Somerset, where preventive maintenance was performed on an “as-needed” basis after mid-2001. (DF 320.) There is no evidence that the actual maintenance performed did not comply with the manufacturer's recommendations. Furthermore, the maintenance performed did not damage any of these machines since they remained operational without need of repair.

caused by normal wear and tear.

Finally, there is no evidence that Hayes breached its maintenance obligation during the Exposure Period with respect to the fifteen Group I Machines that were not in operating condition upon their return to GECC. These machines were inoperable because they were missing parts. There is no evidence that any parts were removed from these machines during the Exposure Period.

Machine Nos. 13, 34 and 36 were missing parts pre-petition, but no more parts were removed prior to the applicable rejection date. (DF 293, 313, 373.) GECC's position in its pre-trial brief that the failure to restore the parts post-petition constitutes breach of an obligation required to be performed under §365(d)(10) is incorrect. Any breach of the lease obligation to maintain those machines did not *first* arise during the Exposure Period, as required by §365(d)(10). *See In re Pan American Airways Corp.*, 245 B.R. 897, 899 (Bankr. S.D. Fla. 2000) (the "plain language of §365(d)(10) refers explicitly to obligations 'first arising from or after 60 days after the order for relief.'"). Before the Petition Date, Hayes's liability for breach of Section VII(a) with respect to these three machines would have been no different than the liability now being asserted by GECC. Section 365(d)(10) is not intended to cover such a liability that clearly arose pre-petition. *See In re Ames Department Stores, Inc.*, 306 B.R. 43, 61 (Bankr. S.D.N.Y. 2004) (where pre-petition liability for cost of cleaning up premises was no different than liability asserted in landlord's administrative expense claim under §365(d)(3), cleanup obligation is not covered by §365(d)(3)).

2. Return Provision

GECC maintains that Hayes breached its return obligation with respect to only Machine Nos. 28, 29 and 46, which were on Schedules 34 and 83. GECC limits its claim

to those machines because they are the only ones that are on Schedules whose base lease terms expired before rejection. Pursuant to Section XI(b) of the Lease, these Schedules continued month to month until they were rejected.

GECC is not entitled to an administrative expense for breach of the return provision because any damages caused by such a breach must be classified as rejection damages, which are not entitled to an administrative priority. See 11 U.S.C. §§ 365(g), 502(a); *In re Templeton*, 154 B.R. 930, 935 (Bankr. W.D. Tex. 1993). (“The Bankruptcy Code provides that damages from the rejection of an unexpired lease are treated as general unsecured claims, not as priority claims.”) In *Muma Services*, this Court held that charges for the early return of leased containers were rejection damages: “[T]hese are not . . . current charges for use of the Containers but are, rather, a payment due only for early return of the Containers, which, in this case is due to NPR’s rejection of the Transamerica Leases.” 279 B.R. at 487. Thus, the charges “arise only as a result of NPR’s rejection of these leases and are, therefore, rejection damages.” *Id.*

This case presents an analogous situation. Section XI(a) of the Lease requires Hayes to return the machines in good working order, normal wear and tear excepted, upon expiration or termination of the Lease. When the base terms of Schedules 34 and 83 expired, the Lease “continue[d] from month to month notwithstanding any expiration or termination of the lease term”. (Lease, §XI(b).) The Lease recognizes this as a “continued leasehold interest”. (Lease, §XI(b).)

Here, although the base lease terms of Schedules 34 and 83 had expired, Hayes’s leasehold interest continued month to month thereafter. Accordingly, Hayes’s leasehold interest did not terminate before rejection. (DF 221, 413) Any return obligation would have

arisen only upon the rejection of the Schedules. Damages resulting from any non-compliance with that provision must be viewed as rejection damages, which cannot be recovered as an administrative expense.

III. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SALE PRICE AND THE ORDERLY LIQUIDATION VALUE OR FAIR MARKET VALUE IS NOT PROBATIVES OF THE CONDITION OF THE MACHINE.

As evidence of a Casualty Occurrence or poor maintenance of the machines, GECC relies on the difference between the price that it received for a machine and the “desktop” Orderly Liquidation Value (“OLV”) or Fair Market Value (“FMV”) of a machine provided by its appraiser, Thomas Hazelhurst.¹⁵ This theory has no force and cannot withstand the compelling testimony of Hayes’s witnesses that two-thirds of the Group I Machines were in operating condition when they were returned to GECC.

Initially, GECC’s theory depends entirely on Hazelhurst’s appraisal. That appraisal is completely unreliable. Hazelhurst’s values are no more than guess work. (DF 471–488) Although this was Hazelhurst’s first retrospective appraisal, he neither researched nor employed the proper methodology for such an analysis. He had virtually no comparables even though the market approach he used called for them. Instead, Hazelhurst utilized the values provided by the two salesmen who worked for him and an outside used machinery vendor. (DF 485, 486.) Their values were widely divergent from Hazelhurst’s own appraisal; but Hazelhurst had absolutely no explanation for how he got from their views to his own. (DF 486.) Finally, Hazelhurst failed to disclose that he had a conflict of interest —his employer had a contract to sell GECC’s machines, earning it \$200,000 in commissions

¹⁵ A desktop appraisal does not value the actual machine, but a machine of the same make, model and vintage assumed to be in reasonable condition. (DF 475.)

damages sustained by GECC.

The appropriate measure of GECC's actual damages for the fifteen machines with parts that became missing during the Exposure Period (and there is no such proof) is the cost of replacing the parts. *See In re Atlantic Container Corp.*, 133 B.R. 980, 992 (Bankr. N.D. Ill. 1992) ("Only the costs of remedying damages to the Premises which actually occurred after the filing of the bankruptcy petition may be treated as administrative expenses."), *In re United Trucking Serv. Inc.*, 851 F.2d 159, 164 (6th Cir. 1988) (applying the bankruptcy court's measure of damages to damaged trailers, which was the reasonable cost of making repairs required under the lease, limited by the amount of the trailers' diminution in value). Comparing the cost of replacing missing parts with the SLV dramatically illustrates how awarding the SLV would give GECC a windfall. Here are some examples:

- Machine No. 17 required replacement of its transformer. (DF 101.) The cost of the transformer is \$1000. (DF 102.) However, the claimed SLV for this machine is \$342,980. (*See* Ex. M-264A.)
- Machine No. 23 was missing a spindle drive. The cost of replacing that part is \$3,780. (Ex. D-251 at 17, item 16a.) Yet the claimed SLV for this machine is \$54,489. (Ex. M-264A.)
- Machine No. 29 was missing some guards, also known as covers, which serve to protect the ball screws. The approximate cost of replacing a cover *and the ball screw* is no greater than \$3,170. (Ex D-251 at 16, items 11a-d.) The claimed SLV is \$68,181. (Ex. M-264-A.)

For all these reasons, the Court should exercise its discretion under §365(d)(10) based on the equities of this case to deny GECC's claim for the SLVs as an administrative expense.

V. GECC HAS FAILED TO PROVE THAT IT IS ENTITLED TO AN ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE UNDER SECTION 503(b)(1) FOR THE GROUP II MACHINES BASED ON HAYES'S ALLEGED TORTIOUS CONDUCT.

GECC claims that it is entitled to an administrative expense under §503(b)(1) for only the nine Group II Machines which were all located at Gainesville. GECC contends that

Hayes's removal of parts from these machines is a "tort" and that it may recover as an administrative expense the damages it sustained as a result. GECC has failed to prove this claim.

Initially, parts were not removed from all nine Group II Machines. Two of the machines were operational on the Petition Date and upon their removal from Gainesville. Thus, only seven were missing parts. (DF 33.)

GECC cannot recover an administrative expense on the basis that removal of parts from these seven machines is a tort. GECC's tort claim is based on *Reading Co. v. Brown*, 391 U.S. 471 (1968). In that case, a fire destroyed the debtor's building and then spread to and destroyed adjoining property owned by the Reading Company during the bankruptcy case. The damage to Reading's property was due to the receiver's negligence. The Supreme Court held that "damages resulting from the negligence of a receiver acting within the scope of his authority as receiver give rise to 'actual and necessary costs' [under] Chapter XI." *Id.*

Reading is distinguishable from GECC's tort claim. First, *Reading* does not apply to a "right to payment originating in a prepetition contract with the debtor." *In re Hemingway Transport, Inc. v. Kahn*, 954 F.2d 1, 7 (1st Cir. 1992). Any obligation to refrain from removing a part from a machine originated in the maintenance obligations contained in Hayes's pre-petition Lease with GECC. Thus, GECC's "tort" claim is nothing other than a dressed-up claim for breach of a pre-petition contract.

Second, even if the alleged conduct amounted to a tort, it must have arisen from the operation of the Debtors' business in order to form the basis of an administrative expense. As this Court has recognized, *Reading* does not apply to a tort that "did not arise from the operation of the Debtors' business." *In re Unidigital, Inc.*, 262 B.R. 283, 290 (Bankr. D.

EXHIBIT A

EXHIBIT B

