

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

EVANSTON INSURANCE COMPANY,  
Plaintiff,  
v.  
AMERICAN SAFETY INDEMNITY COMPANY,  
Defendant.

No. C 10-01472 CW  
ORDER GRANTING IN PART AND DENYING IN PART PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR PARTIAL SUMMARY JUDGMENT AND DENYING DEFENDANT'S CROSS-MOTION FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT (Docket Nos. 20 and 21)

Plaintiff Evanston Insurance Company asserts an equitable contribution claim against Defendant American Safety Indemnity Company. Plaintiff moves for partial summary judgment. Defendant opposes Plaintiff's motion and cross-moves for summary judgment that Plaintiff is not entitled to equitable contribution. Plaintiff opposes Defendant's cross-motion. The motions were taken under submission on the papers. Having considered the papers submitted by the parties, the Court GRANTS in part Plaintiff's motion for partial summary judgment and DENIES it in part and DENIES Defendant's cross-motion for summary judgment.

BACKGROUND

The parties are insurance companies with a common insured, Northern California Universal Enterprise Company (Northern Cal). Northern Cal is a developer which constructed single-family residences in Mendota, California. These homes are at issue in Ayala v. Northern California Universal Enterprise Company, No.

United States District Court  
For the Northern District of California

1 07CECG01000-AMS, a lawsuit pending in Fresno County Superior Court.  
2 Plaintiff seeks contribution from Defendant for the costs to defend  
3 Northern Cal in the Ayala action.

4 The parties maintain that the current action raises only legal  
5 questions concerning one of the insurance policies Defendant issued  
6 to Northern Cal. They stipulate to the facts and evidence  
7 described below.

8 A. Northern Cal's Insurance Policies

9 Both parties issued general liability policies to Northern  
10 Cal. This action concerns only one of Defendant's policies, No.  
11 ESL010742-05-01, which was effective September 19, 2005 through  
12 September 19, 2006. In particular, the parties dispute the effects  
13 of two policy endorsements and one exclusion on Defendant's duty to  
14 defend Northern Cal in the Ayala action.

15 The policy contains a Self-Insured Retention (SIR)<sup>1</sup>  
16 Endorsement. The endorsement provides an SIR of \$50,000 per  
17 occurrence, which applies to "all damages, however caused." Jt.  
18 Stip. ¶ 7. The endorsement further states,

19 As a condition precedent to our obligations to provide or  
20 continue to provide indemnity, coverage or defense  
21 hereunder, the insured, upon receipt of notice of any  
22 "suit", incident or "occurrence" that may give rise to a  
23 "suit", and at our request, shall pay over and deposit  
24 with us all or any part of the self-insured retention  
25 amount as specified in the policy, requested by us, to be  
26 applied by us as payment toward any damages or  
27 SUPPLEMENTARY PAYMENTS - COVERAGES A AND B incurred in

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28 <sup>1</sup> An SIR, which is also referred to as a "retained limit,"  
pertains to "a specific sum or percentage of loss that is the  
insured's initial responsibility and must be satisfied before there  
is any coverage under the policy." Forecast Homes, Inc. v.  
Steadfast Ins. Co., 181 Cal. App. 4th 1466, 1474 (2010) (citation  
omitted).

1 the handling or settlement of any such incident,  
2 "occurrence" or "suit".

3 Id. Occurrence is defined to mean "an accident, including  
4 continuous or repeated exposure to substantially the same general  
5 harmful conditions." Jt. Stip., Ex. 2, at 12.

6 The policy also includes a Subcontractor's Warranty  
7 Endorsement, which provides,

8 As a condition precedent to coverage for the insured  
9 under this policy for injury or damage covered by this  
10 policy arising directly or indirectly out of the actions  
11 of a subcontractor working directly or indirectly on  
12 behalf of the Named Insured and for which the Named  
13 Insured becomes legally liable, it is hereby agreed and  
14 understood that such subcontractor shall maintain  
occurrence form general liability coverage covering the  
work performed by such subcontractor . . . . Such  
insurance must also include the Named Insured as an  
Additional Insured. We shall have no obligation for  
defense or indemnity of any insured for actions of  
subcontractors if, at any time, all of the terms and  
conditions of this Endorsement are not satisfied.

15 Jt. Stip. ¶ 8. The endorsement further states, "All other terms,  
16 conditions and exclusions under the policy are applicable to this  
17 Endorsement and remain unchanged." Id.

18 Finally, the policy contains a Total Prior Work Exclusion,  
19 which states,

20 (3) The "occurrence" and resulting injury or  
21 damage must result, in its entirety, from "your  
22 work" performed during the policy period of  
this policy:

23 If the "occurrence" or resulting injury or damage is  
24 claimed to have resulted from "your work" first commenced  
25 during the policy period of this policy, then the only  
26 applicable policy is this policy, regardless of whether  
27 "your work" continued beyond the policy period of this  
policy. If "your work" was performed in part during the  
policy period of this policy, in part prior to the policy  
period of this policy, any "occurrence" and resulting  
injury or damage claimed to result from "your work" will  
be deemed to have resulted, in its entirety, solely from

1 "your work" prior to the policy period of this policy  
2 except if this policy is a renewal of an immediate  
3 preceding policy issued by us so that coverage is  
4 continuous, without any gap in time, between this policy  
5 and the immediately preceding prior policy issued by us,  
6 in which case any "occurrence" and resulting injury or  
7 damage claimed to result from "your work" will be deemed  
8 to have resulted, in its entirety, solely from "your  
9 work" in the policy period of the immediately preceding  
10 prior policy issued by us. Under no circumstances shall  
11 more than one policy issued by us apply to any  
12 "occurrence" and resulting injury or damage, and under no  
13 circumstances shall the total limits of insurance  
14 applicable to any "occurrence" and resulting injury or  
15 damage exceed the lesser of, the limits of this policy or  
16 the limits of any prior or subsequent policy issued  
17 by us, even if the "occurrence" and resulting injury or  
18 damage occurred in, or commenced and concluded, in  
19 different policy periods.

20 Jt. Stip. ¶ 9. The exclusion further states, "All other terms,  
21 conditions and exclusions under the policy are applicable to this  
22 Endorsement and remain unchanged." Id.

23 B. Underlying Action and Northern Cal's Tender for Defense

24 The Ayala action was filed on April 2, 2007. The Ayala  
25 plaintiffs allegedly own single-family homes constructed by  
26 Northern Cal in Mendota. They aver that Northern Cal, along with  
27 other unknown defendants, "did not construct the property in a  
28 workmanlike manner," leading to several defects. Jt. Stip., Ex. 1  
¶ 15. They assert claims for strict products liability, breaches  
of the implied warranties of fitness and merchantability, and  
negligence.

Twenty-one homes are involved in the Ayala action. Six of  
these homes were completed prior to the inception of Defendant's  
policy.

Northern Cal tendered defense of the Ayala action to Defendant  
on June 29, 2008. In a letter dated August 29, 2008, Defendant

1 responded to Northern Cal, stating that it

2 agrees to participate in the defense of Northern  
3 California Universal in the underlying suit, subject to  
4 pay over of the \$50,000 Self-Insured Retention ("SIR")  
5 under policy number ESL010742-05-01 (eff. 9/19/05-  
6 9/19/06) and pay over of the \$50,000 SIR under ESL010742-  
7 06-02 (eff. 9/19/06-09/19/07), and pursuant to the terms,  
8 conditions and/or provisions of the ASIC policies and  
9 under a reservation of rights as set forth herein.

10 Jt. Stip., Ex. 5, at 1. The letter further stated that, once  
11 Defendant received "one of the two \$50,000 SIR payments," it would  
12 "retain attorney Sheila Fix . . . to defend Northern California  
13 Universal." Id. The letter then recited the relevant facts of the  
14 Ayala action, stating,

15 Six (6) of the homes in this litigation were completed  
16 prior to the inception of the first ASIC policy period.  
17 . . . Fourteen (14) homes in this litigation were  
18 completed during the first ASIC policy period (effective  
19 9/19/05-9/19/06). . . . One of the homes in this  
20 litigation . . . was completed during the second ASIC  
21 policy period (effective 9/19/06-9/19/07).

22 Id. The letter also detailed various exclusions and endorsements  
23 contained in Northern Cal's policy and stated that, by listing  
24 these provisions, Defendant "does not intend to waive any of the  
25 terms, conditions or defenses available to it under the above  
26 referenced policies of insurance, or defenses available under the  
27 law." Id. at 10.

28 In a follow-up letter dated October 16, 2008, Defendant  
informed Northern Cal that its defense of the Ayala action was  
dependent on Northern Cal satisfying two conditions precedent. Jt.  
Stip., Ex. 6, at 1. The first required Northern Cal's payment of  
one of the \$50,000 SIRs. The second involved the Subcontractor's  
Warranty Endorsement. With regard to this condition, the letter

1 stated,

2 As a condition precedent to coverage under the policy,  
3 Northern California Universal was required to be named as  
4 an additional insured under all of the subcontractor  
5 policies. In the event Northern California Universal was  
6 not named as an additional insured under all  
7 subcontractor policies, then you did not meet your  
8 condition precedent relative to this endorsement.

9 Id. at 3.

10 Sometime thereafter, Northern Cal informed Defendant of its  
11 objection to paying one of the \$50,000 SIRs "up front," stating  
12 that all "damages and attorneys will ultimately be paid by  
13 subcontractor insurers. To the exten[t] they are not, Northern can  
14 and will pay up to \$50,000 at the end of the settlement process."  
15 Jt. Stip., Ex. 7, at 1. In a letter dated February 25, 2009,  
16 Defendant responded to Northern Cal's objections, reiterating that  
17 payment "of the SIR is a condition precedent to coverage" and that  
18 "coverage will not be triggered until at least one SIR is paid."  
19 Id. Defendant further restated that Northern Cal also had to  
20 satisfy "the condition precedent in the Subcontractors Warranty  
21 Endorsement." Id.

22 On or about October 21, 2009, Northern Cal tendered a check  
23 for \$50,000 to Defendant to cover one of its SIRs.

24 In a letter dated June 14, 2010, Defendant acknowledged that  
25 Northern Cal had satisfied the condition to pay one of its \$50,000  
26 SIRs. However, Defendant indicated that Northern Cal had not yet  
27 met the condition under the Subcontractor's Warranty Endorsement.  
28 Defendant thus requested documentary evidence that Northern Cal was  
included as an "Additional Insured" on its subcontractors'  
policies. Jt. Stip., Ex. 9, at 3. Northern Cal, however,

1 "obtained no Additional Insured endorsements in its favor from any  
2 of the subcontractors that performed work at the development at  
3 issue." Jt. Stip. ¶ 11.

4 Defendant has not paid any defense costs incurred by Northern  
5 Cal in the Ayala action. Nor has it returned the \$50,000 check  
6 tendered by Northern Cal for the SIR.

7 LEGAL STANDARD

8 Summary judgment is properly granted when no genuine and  
9 disputed issues of material fact remain, and when, viewing the  
10 evidence most favorably to the non-moving party, the movant is  
11 clearly entitled to prevail as a matter of law. Fed. R. Civ. P.  
12 56; Celotex Corp. v. Catrett, 477 U.S. 317, 322-23 (1986);  
13 Eisenberg v. Ins. Co. of N. Am., 815 F.2d 1285, 1288-89 (9th Cir.  
14 1987).

15 DISCUSSION

16 Defendant asserts that the Subcontractor's Warranty  
17 Endorsement and the Total Prior Work Exclusion preclude coverage  
18 for any claims in the Ayala action and, as a result, it does not  
19 have a duty to defend Northern Cal. Defendant also maintains that,  
20 even if it had a duty, it did not attach until October 21, 2009,  
21 the date Northern Cal tendered its check for \$50,000.

22 Plaintiff asks the Court to adjudicate summarily that neither  
23 the Subcontractor's Warranty Endorsement nor the Total Prior Work  
24 Exclusion bars coverage and that Defendant's duty to defend began  
25 to run on June 29, 2008, the date Northern Cal tendered defense of  
26 the Ayala action to Defendant.

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1 I. Existence of a Duty to Defend

2 A "liability insurer owes a broad duty to defend its insured  
3 against claims that create a potential for indemnity." Horace Mann  
4 Ins. Co. v. Barbara B., 4 Cal. 4th 1076, 1081 (1993) (citing Gray  
5 v. Zurich Ins. Co., 65 Cal. 2d 263 (1966)). An "insured is  
6 entitled to a defense if the underlying complaint alleges the  
7 insured's liability for damages potentially covered under the  
8 policy, or if the complaint might be amended to give rise to a  
9 liability that would be covered under the policy." Montrose Chem.  
10 Corp. v. Superior Court, 6 Cal. 4th 287, 299 (1993) (emphasis in  
11 original and citation omitted). That the duty to defend requires  
12 only a showing of a potential for liability is "one reason why it  
13 is often said that the duty to defend is broader than the duty to  
14 indemnify." Id. at 299.

15 To show that a duty to defend has attached, an insured "must  
16 prove the existence of a potential for coverage." Montrose, 6 Cal.  
17 4th at 300 (emphasis in original). In contrast, to show that no  
18 duty exists, "the insurer must establish the absence of any such  
19 potential." Id. (emphasis in original). "In other words, the  
20 insured need only show that the underlying claim may fall within  
21 policy coverage; the insurer must prove it cannot." Id. (emphasis  
22 in original).

23 A duty to defend may exist "even where coverage is in doubt  
24 and ultimately does not develop." Id. at 295 (citation and  
25 internal quotation marks omitted). "If any facts stated or fairly  
26 inferable in the complaint, or otherwise known or discovered by the  
27 insurer, suggest a claim potentially covered by the policy, the



1 insurer's duty to defend arises and is not extinguished until the  
2 insurer negates all facts suggesting potential coverage."

3 Scottsdale Ins. Co. v. MV Transp., 36 Cal. 4th 643, 655 (2005).

4 "Determination of the duty to defend depends, in the first  
5 instance, on a comparison between the allegations of the complaint  
6 and the terms of the policy." Id.

7 A. Effect of the Subcontractor's Warranty Endorsement

8 Defendant maintains that, under the Subcontractor's Warranty  
9 Endorsement, Northern Cal's failure to obtain "Additional Insured"  
10 endorsements in its favor from any of its subcontractors precludes  
11 all coverage under the policy at issue here.

12 The plain language of the endorsement does not support  
13 Defendant's broad reading. As noted above, the endorsement  
14 provides that the requirement that Northern Cal be named as an  
15 Additional Insured on its subcontractors' policies is "a condition  
16 precedent to coverage . . . under this policy for injury or damage  
17 covered by this policy arising directly or indirectly out of the  
18 actions of a subcontractor working directly or indirectly on behalf  
19 of the Named Insured and for which the Named Insured becomes  
20 legally liable." Jt. Stip. ¶ 8 (emphasis added). The endorsement  
21 later states that Defendant "shall have no obligation for defense  
22 or indemnity of any insured for actions of subcontractors if, at  
23 any time, all of the terms and conditions of this Endorsement are  
24 not satisfied." Id. (emphasis added). This language unambiguously  
25 restricts the condition precedent to instances in which Northern  
26 Cal seeks defense or indemnity for a particular subcontractor's  
27 actions. Defendant's interpretation fails to give effect to the

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1 limiting prepositional phrases "for injury or damage . . . arising  
2 directly or indirectly out of the actions of a subcontractor" and  
3 "for actions of subcontractors." These two phrases, or variants of  
4 them, did not appear in the policy at issue in Scottsdale Insurance  
5 Co. v. Essex Insurance Co., 98 Cal. App. 4th 86 (2002), a case  
6 Defendant cites. There, the policy provided that one of the  
7 "conditions for coverage" was that the insured "will be named as  
8 additional insured on all subcontractors general liability  
9 policies." Id. at 93-94. The court held this condition to be  
10 enforceable and, because the insured was not so named, the policy  
11 offered no coverage. Id. at 94-98. Unlike the endorsement here,  
12 however, the endorsement in Scottsdale did not limit the  
13 requirement to coverage for certain actions.

14 Defendant's reliance on North American Capacity Insurance Co.  
15 v. Claremont Liability Ins. Co., 177 Cal. App. 4th 272 (2009), is  
16 similarly unavailing. That case involved a warranty endorsement,  
17 contained in Claremont's policy, nearly identical to the one at  
18 issue here, with which the insured had failed to comply. Id. at  
19 276. However, the circumstances of the case are distinguishable  
20 from those here. There, North American sought equitable  
21 contribution from Claremont for indemnity costs related to a \$1.1  
22 million settlement. Id. at 275-76. Following a bench trial, the  
23 trial court concluded that, because of the warranty endorsement,  
24 Claremont had no liability for \$909,574 in damages caused by the  
25 insured's subcontractors. See id. at 276, 287-291. The appellate  
26 court affirmed the judgment of the trial court. Here, Defendant  
27 does not point to any evidence that any or all of the damages

1 alleged in the Ayala action are attributable to Northern Cal's  
2 subcontractors. Indeed, North American supports Plaintiff's  
3 position. Notwithstanding that insured's failure to satisfy the  
4 warranty endorsement, Claremont was found to be liable for  
5 \$40,027.55 of the \$1.1 million settlement. Id. at 276. This  
6 suggests that, here, Defendant is potentially liable for a portion  
7 of Northern Cal's loss, giving rise to a duty to defend.

8 A review of the Ayala complaint confirms a potential for  
9 liability. The plaintiffs allege that Northern Cal failed to  
10 construct their homes "in a workmanlike manner," which has caused  
11 defects. Jt. Stip., Ex. 1 ¶ 15. In turn, these purported defects  
12 led to "resultant and consequential damage," including "excessive  
13 moisture intrusion through concrete slabs damaging floor coverings,  
14 furnishings and personal effects" of the plaintiffs. Id. ¶ 16.  
15 Defendant maintains that its policy "does not cover the cost of  
16 removing, repairing, or replacing the defective work performed by"  
17 Northern Cal. Def.'s Mot. 8. However, the exclusions Defendant  
18 cites do not appear to address damage to the Ayala plaintiffs'  
19 personal property.<sup>2</sup>

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21 <sup>2</sup> Defendant cites the policy's exclusions for property damage  
22 to "your product," property damage to "your work," and property  
23 damage to "impaired property" or property that has not been  
24 physically injured resulting from defects in "your product" or  
25 "your work." See Jt. Stip., Ex. 2, CG 00 01 07 98, at 4. "Your  
26 product" is defined to mean any "goods or products, other than real  
27 property, manufactured, sold, handled, distributed or disposed of  
28 by" Northern Cal. Id. at 13. "Your work" is defined to mean  
"[w]ork or operations performed by you or on your behalf; and . . .  
[m]aterials, parts or equipment furnished in connection with such  
work or operations." Id. "Impaired property" refers to "tangible  
property other than 'your product' or 'your work', that cannot be  
used or is less useful because . . . [i]t incorporates 'your  
product' or 'your work' that is known or thought be defective,

1 As in North American, Northern Cal's failure to satisfy the  
2 Subcontractor's Warranty Exclusion may limit Defendant's exposure  
3 for indemnity costs. However, Defendant has not foreclosed the  
4 possibility that, notwithstanding Northern Cal's default, some of  
5 the Ayala plaintiffs' claims could be covered by its policy.  
6 Accordingly, the Court grants Plaintiff's motion for partial  
7 summary judgment with respect to the Subcontractor's Warranty  
8 Exclusion and summarily adjudicates that this endorsement does not  
9 preclude coverage for all claims in the Ayala action. The Court  
10 denies Defendant's motion for summary judgment based on this  
11 endorsement.

12 B. Effect of the Total Prior Work Exclusion

13 Defendant maintains that, because six of the homes at issue in  
14 the Ayala action were completed before the effective date of its  
15 policy, the Total Prior Work Exclusion precludes any coverage.  
16 Defendant's reading is not supported.

17 As noted above, the exclusion requires that the "'occurrence'  
18 and resulting injury or damage must result, in its entirety, from  
19 'your work' performed during the policy period of this policy."  
20 Jt. Stip. ¶ 9. The exclusion explains,

21 If "your work" was performed in part during the policy  
22 period of this policy, in part prior to the policy period  
23 of this policy, any "occurrence" and resulting injury or  
24 damage claimed to result from "your work" will be deemed  
25 to have resulted, in its entirety, solely from "your  
26 work" prior to the policy period of this policy . . . .

27 Id.

28 Defendant's argument requires interpreting "occurrence" to  
29 \_\_\_\_\_  
30 deficient, inadequate or dangerous." Id.

1 refer to all the claims asserted in the Ayala lawsuit. In essence,  
2 Defendant maintains that, because the Ayala action involves some  
3 claims concerning homes on which Northern Cal performed work before  
4 the inception of the policy, the exclusion precludes coverage for  
5 all claims, including for those homes on which Northern Cal began  
6 work during the policy period and completed during the period or  
7 thereafter. Under Defendant's theory, had the Ayala lawsuit not  
8 included homes worked on or completed before the policy period,  
9 Northern Cal would be covered. This reading impermissibly premises  
10 coverage on the scope of the underlying lawsuit. As the California  
11 Supreme Court has stated, "the third party plaintiff cannot be the  
12 arbiter of coverage." Montrose, 6 Cal. 4th at 296.

13 The exclusion, when read in the context of the policy,  
14 unambiguously provides that there is no coverage for claims of  
15 injury or damage resulting from work that began or was completed  
16 before the policy's effective date. The exclusion focuses on  
17 Northern Cal's actions, not on the claims the Ayala plaintiffs  
18 chose to include in a single lawsuit. This interpretation is  
19 confirmed not only by the exclusion itself, which refers to  
20 Northern Cal's work, but by the definition of "occurrence," which  
21 is "an accident." Jt. Stip., Ex. 2, CG 00 01 07 98, at 12. Giving  
22 the word "accident" its ordinary meaning, it is apparent that an  
23 occurrence refers to some act by Northern Cal, not the lawsuit  
24 filed by the Ayala plaintiffs.

25 While some acts of Northern Cal may not be covered, Defendant  
26 has not foreclosed the potential for coverage. The Ayala complaint  
27 does not allege when the homes were built. And while the parties  
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1 stipulate to the fact that six of the twenty-one homes were  
2 completed before the policy period, they do not indicate when work  
3 on the other homes began. Further, Defendant does not offer  
4 evidence that an accident caused by Northern Cal's work during the  
5 period before the policy's inception caused all the injury or  
6 damage alleged in the Ayala suit. As a result, some of the Ayala  
7 claims are potentially covered by Defendant's policy, which imposes  
8 a duty to defend on Defendant.

9 Accordingly, the Court grants Plaintiff's motion for partial  
10 summary judgment with respect to the Total Prior Work Exclusion and  
11 summarily adjudicates that this endorsement does not preclude  
12 coverage for all claims in the Ayala action. The Court denies  
13 Defendant's motion for summary judgment based on this endorsement.  
14 Because neither the Subcontractor's Warranty Exclusion nor the  
15 Total Prior Work Exclusion bars coverage, the Court summarily  
16 adjudicates that Defendant has a duty to defend Northern Cal.

17 II. Date on which Duty to Defend Attached

18 As already noted, Defendant's policy at issue here contained a  
19 \$50,000 SIR, which Northern Cal paid on October 21, 2009. In  
20 relevant part, Defendant's SIR endorsement provides that, as "a  
21 condition precedent to our obligations to provide . . . defense  
22 hereunder, the insured, upon receipt of notice of any  
23 'suit' . . . , and at our request, shall pay over and deposit with  
24 us all or any part of the self-insured retention amount as  
25 specified in the policy, requested by us . . . ." Jt. Stip. ¶ 7.

26 Plaintiff does not dispute that the endorsement's language  
27 plainly and clearly states that satisfaction of the SIR is a

1 condition precedent to Defendant's duty to defend. However,  
2 Plaintiff maintains that once an SIR is satisfied, an insurer's  
3 duty to defend should, as a matter of law, run retroactively to the  
4 date an insured made a tender for defense.

5 Plaintiff relies solely on Montrose, in which the California  
6 Supreme Court stated, "The defense duty is a continuing one,  
7 arising on tender of defense and lasting until the underlying  
8 lawsuit is concluded." 6 Cal. 4th at 295. However, the policy in  
9 Montrose did not make the insurer's duty to defend dependent on the  
10 payment of a self-insured retention, and the court did not consider  
11 what impact such a condition precedent would have on when the duty  
12 would arise.

13 In Legacy Vulcan Corp. v. Superior Court, the court addressed  
14 the impact of an SIR on an insurer's duty to defend. 185 Cal. App.  
15 4th 677, 694-97 (2010). It concluded that a provision requiring  
16 exhaustion of an SIR does not, on its own, prevent the imposition  
17 of duty to defend upon an insurer's tender for defense. Id. at  
18 696. However, the court stated, if a policy plainly and clearly  
19 states that the insurer's duty to defend is conditioned on the  
20 exhaustion of an SIR, the duty will not arise at tender, but rather  
21 when such exhaustion occurs. See id. "In our view, a true  
22 'self-insured retention,' expressly limits the duty to indemnify to  
23 liability in excess of a specified amount and expressly precludes  
24 any duty to defend until the insured has actually paid the  
25 specified amount." Id. at 694 n.12 (emphasis added).

26 Legacy Vulcan comports with other California cases  
27 interpreting a condition precedent. In North American, the court

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1 summarized that such a condition "refers to an act, condition or  
2 event that must occur before the insurance contract becomes  
3 effective or binding on the parties." 177 Cal. App. 4th at 289  
4 (citation and internal quotation marks omitted). These conditions  
5 "neither confer nor exclude coverage for a particular risk but,  
6 rather, impose certain duties on the insured in order to obtain the  
7 coverage provided by the policy." Id. (citation and internal  
8 quotation marks omitted). Here, the policy clearly conditioned  
9 Defendant's defense duty on Northern Cal's payment of the SIR. No  
10 duty to defend attached until that payment was received, and  
11 Montrose does not require otherwise.

12 Plaintiff asserts that Defendant's SIR endorsement states that  
13 Northern Cal's obligation to pay the SIR is not triggered until  
14 Defendant makes a request. Plaintiff complains that this  
15 construction permits Defendant to "manipulate and postpone" its  
16 defense obligations by delaying its request for the SIR.<sup>3</sup> Pl.'s  
17 Mot. 14. However, Plaintiff offers no authority or persuasive  
18 argument to support its assertion that the plain language of the  
19 policy should be disregarded.

20 Defendant's duty to defend did not arise on the date Northern  
21 Cal made its tender for defense. Accordingly, the Court denies  
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23 <sup>3</sup> Notably, Defendant demanded payment of the SIR in August,  
24 2008, two months after Northern Cal tendered the Ayala action for  
25 defense. The SIR was not paid until more than a year later,  
26 apparently because of Northern Cal's intransigence. Further,  
27 adopting Plaintiff's position could expose an insurer to  
unwarranted prejudice. An insured could, as here, refuse to pay an  
SIR until the end of an action. As a result, an insurer could be  
saddled, through no fault of its own, with defense costs that it  
had no role in incurring.



1 Plaintiff's motion for partial summary judgment that Defendant is  
2 obliged to share with Plaintiff payment of defense costs from the  
3 date of Northern Cal's tender of defense.<sup>4</sup>

4 CONCLUSION

5 For the foregoing reasons, the Court GRANTS in part  
6 Plaintiff's motion for partial summary judgment and DENIES it in  
7 part (Docket No. 20), and DENIES Defendant's motion for summary  
8 judgment (Docket No. 21). It is summarily adjudicated that neither  
9 the Subcontractor's Warranty Endorsement nor the Total Prior Work  
10 Exclusion preclude coverage for all claims in the Ayala action and,  
11 therefore, Defendant has a duty to defend. The Court denies  
12 Plaintiff's motion for partial summary judgment that Defendant  
13 became liable for defense costs from the date that Northern Cal  
14 offered its tender for defense. The Court did not rely on any  
15 evidence to which Defendant objected.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, Defendant's  
16 objections are overruled as moot.

17 The parties shall meet and confer to attempt to agree on  
18 Defendant's fair share of defense costs, and arrange for payment  
19 thereof. If the parties reach an agreement, they shall notify the  
20 Court and stipulate to Plaintiff's voluntary dismissal of this  
21 action. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 41(a)(1)(A)(ii). Alternatively, if  
22 either or both of the parties wish to appeal this Order, the

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24 <sup>4</sup> Defendant did not move, in the alternative, for partial  
25 summary judgment on the date on which its duty to defend arose.

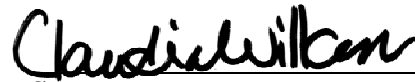
26 <sup>5</sup> Defendant's submission of evidentiary objections in a brief  
27 separate from its reply brief violates this Court's Standing Order  
28 and Civil L.R. 7-3(c). In any future filing, Defendant shall  
comply with this Court's Standing Order and the Civil Local Rules.

1 parties may reach a conditional agreement with respect to the  
2 amount of damages and then move for judgment pursuant to Federal  
3 Rule of Civil Procedure 54(b).

4 If they cannot agree on the amount of damages, the parties  
5 shall file cross-motions for summary judgment on damages.  
6 Plaintiff's motion for summary judgment shall be due April 28,  
7 2011. Defendant's cross-motion for summary judgment and opposition  
8 to Plaintiff's motion shall be due May 12, 2011. Plaintiff's  
9 opposition to Defendant's cross-motion and reply in support of its  
10 motion shall be due May 19, 2011. Defendant's reply in support of  
11 its cross-motion shall be due May 26, 2011. A hearing on these  
12 motions and a further case management conference will be held on  
13 June 9, 2011 at 2:00 p.m., unless the issue is taken under  
14 submission on the papers.

15 IT IS SO ORDERED.

16  
17  
18 Dated: 2/10/11



CLAUDIA WILKEN  
United States District Judge