

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
(Release No. 34-58514; File No. SR-FINRA-2008-039)

September 11, 2008

Self-Regulatory Organizations; Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc.; Order Approving the Proposed Rule Change to Adopt FINRA Rules 5110 (Corporate Financing Rule), 5190 (Notification Requirements for Offering Participants) and 6470 (Withdrawal of Quotations in an OTC Equity Security in Compliance with SEC Regulation M) in the Consolidated FINRA Rulebook

I. Introduction

On July 16, 2008, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc. (“FINRA”) (f/k/a National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc. (“NASD”)) filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (“Commission” or “SEC”), pursuant to Section 19(b)(1) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (“Exchange Act” or “Act”)¹ and Rule 19b-4 thereunder,² a proposal to adopt most of NASD Rule 2710 (Corporate Financing Rule) as FINRA Rule 5110 in the consolidated FINRA rulebook, consolidating the rules in FINRA’s jurisdiction relating to Regulation M as new Rules 5190 and 6470 in the consolidated FINRA rulebook, and make conforming changes to the rules related to Regulation M applicable to the Alternative Display Facility (“ADF”). This proposal was published for comment in the Federal Register on August 11, 2008.³ The Commission received no comments on the proposal. This order approves this proposed rule change.

II. Description of the Proposed Rule Change

As part of the process of developing the new consolidated rulebook

¹ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(1).

² 17 CFR 240.19b-4.

³ Securities Exchange Act Release No. 58302 (August 4, 2008), 73 FR 46657 (August 11, 2008) (SR-FINRA-2008-039).

(“Consolidated FINRA Rulebook”),⁴ FINRA is proposing to (1) adopt NASD Rule 2710 as FINRA Rule 5110, with the exception of paragraphs (b)(10) and (11); (2) adopt new FINRA Rule 5190, which would house the Regulation M-related notice requirements applicable to members participating in securities offerings (including paragraphs (b)(10) and (11) of NASD Rule 2710 and paragraph (a) of Incorporated NYSE Rule 392); (3) adopt new FINRA Rule 6470, which would house certain Regulation M-related requirements that are currently in the Over-the-counter (“OTC”) Bulletin Board (“OTCBB”) rules and would apply to all OTC Equity Securities;⁵ and (4) make conforming amendments to the Regulation M-related rules applicable to the ADF.

A. Corporate Financing Rule

NASD Rule 2710, except paragraphs (b)(10) and (11) (which are discussed below), regulates the underwriting terms and arrangements of most public offerings (including shelf offerings) of securities sold through FINRA members. NASD Rule 2710 requires members to file with FINRA’s Corporate Financing Department (the “Corporate Financing Department”) information regarding initial public offerings and certain secondary offerings and to submit pertinent documentation, including registration statements. The Corporate Financing Department reviews this information prior to commencement of the offering to determine

⁴ The current FINRA rulebook consists of two sets of rules: (1) NASD Rules and (2) rules incorporated from NYSE (“Incorporated NYSE Rules”) (together referred to as the “Transitional Rulebook”). The Incorporated NYSE Rules apply only to those members of FINRA that are also members of the NYSE (“Dual Members”). Dual Members also must comply with NASD Rules. For more information about the rulebook consolidation process, see FINRA Information Notice, March 12, 2008 (Rulebook Consolidation Process).

⁵ NASD Rule 6610(d) defines OTC Equity Security as “any non-exchange-listed security and certain exchange-listed securities that do not otherwise qualify for real-time trade reporting.”

whether the underwriting compensation and other terms and arrangements meet the requirements of applicable FINRA rules. Members are required to receive the Corporate Financing Department's opinion of no-objections to the offering terms prior to participating in the offering.

FINRA proposed to adopt NASD Rule 2710 as FINRA Rule 5110 in the Consolidated FINRA Rulebook. With the exception of the deletion of paragraphs (b)(10) and (11) as discussed below, FINRA proposed to make only technical non-substantive changes to Rule 2710 such as replacing references to "NASD" or "the Association" with "FINRA" and certain conforming changes to references in Rule 2710 to, e.g., the Exchange Act, SEA Rules, the Securities Act and Securities Act Rules.

B. Regulation M-Related Requirements

Regulation M is designed to prevent manipulation by persons with an interest in the outcome of an offering and generally prohibits activities and conduct that could artificially influence the market for an offered security.⁶ In this regard, Regulation M generally prohibits underwriters, broker-dealers, issuers and other persons participating in a distribution from directly or indirectly bidding for or purchasing the offered security (or inducing another person to do so) during the "restricted period," which commences on the later of either one or five business days prior to the determination of the offering price or such time that a person becomes a distribution participant.⁷ For purposes of determining whether a one or five-day or no restricted period applies under Regulation M, the SEC has adopted a dual standard of world-wide average daily trading volume ("ADTV") and public float value. Regulation M also governs certain market activities, usually undertaken by the managing underwriter or underwriting group

⁶ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 38067 (December 20, 1996), 62 FR 520 (January 3, 1997).

⁷ 17 CFR 242.100, definition of "restricted period."

(i.e., stabilizing bids, syndicate covering transactions and penalty bids)⁸ in connection with an offering and requires that notice of such activity be provided to the relevant self-regulatory organization or, in the case of stabilizing bids, the market where the stabilizing bid is to be posted. Finally, Regulation M generally prohibits any person from selling short a security that is the subject of a public offering and purchasing the security in the offering if such short sale was effected during the restricted period (which, for purposes of the short sale restrictions, generally is the five-day period prior to pricing).⁹

As part of FINRA's program to monitor for member compliance with Regulation M, FINRA's Market Regulation Department (the "Market Regulation Department") reviews members' OTC trading and quoting activity for prohibited purchases and/or bids during the applicable restricted period and short sales during the five-day period prior to pricing the offering. FINRA rules must ensure that FINRA receives pertinent distribution-related information in a timely fashion to facilitate this component of FINRA's Regulation M compliance program.

1. Existing FINRA Rules

FINRA's current Regulation M-related rules comprise notice requirements set forth in NASD Rule 2710(b)(10) and (11) and Incorporated NYSE Rule 392 (Notification Requirements for Offerings of Listed Securities), as well as marketplace-specific requirements in the OTCBB and ADF rules. NASD Rule 2710(b)(10) requires members that are acting as manager (or in a similar capacity) of a distribution of unlisted securities that are considered a subject or reference

⁸ 17 CFR 242.100, definitions of "stabilizing," "syndicate covering transaction," and "penalty bid."

⁹ See Securities Exchange Act Release No. 56206 (August 6, 2007), 72 FR 45094 (August 10, 2007).

security subject to Rule 101 of Regulation M or an “actively traded” security under Rule 101 of Regulation M to submit a request for an Underwriting Activity Report (“UAR”) from the Market Regulation Department. The request for a UAR, which is the mechanism by which FINRA currently receives notice of prospective distributions, must be submitted at the time a registration statement or similar offering document is filed with the Corporate Financing Department, the Commission, or other regulatory agency and if not filed with any regulatory agency, at least two business days prior to commencement of the restricted period. Such request must include a copy of the registration statement or similar offering document. If no member is acting as manager, then each member that is a distribution participant or affiliated purchaser shall submit the request for a UAR, unless another member has assumed responsibility for compliance.

NASD Rule 2710(b)(11) requires members that are acting as manager (or in a similar capacity) of a distribution of securities that are listed on a national securities exchange and considered a subject security or reference security subject to Rule 101 of Regulation M or an “actively traded” security under Rule 101 of Regulation M to provide notice to the Market Regulation Department of the pricing of the distribution, including the date and time of pricing, the offering price and the time the distribution terminated. Such notice must be provided no later than the close of business the day the offering terminates and may be submitted on the UAR.

Incorporated NYSE Rule 392(a) requires that Dual Members provide notice of pricing and related information (including the restricted period, if any, the offering price and the basis for pricing) in connection with an offering of an NYSE-listed security. Incorporated NYSE Rule 392(b) requires that Dual Members provide notice of syndicate covering transactions and penalty bids and stabilizing bids in connection with an offering of an NYSE-listed security.

FINRA’s OTCBB and ADF-related marketplace rules also include certain Regulation M-

related requirements. Any member that is a distribution participant or affiliated purchaser in a distribution of an OTCBB-eligible security must provide notice to the Corporate Financing Department of its intention to impose a penalty bid or conduct a syndicate covering transaction pursuant to Rule 104 of Regulation M.¹⁰

In addition, members are required to withdraw their quotations in the OTCBB (in OTCBB-eligible securities) and the ADF (in NMS stocks) to comply with applicable restricted periods under Regulation M. Specifically, a member that is a distribution participant or affiliated purchaser in a distribution of an OTCBB-eligible security must withdraw its quotations in the offered security,¹¹ and provide notice to FINRA's Operations Department prior to pricing.¹² The member must also provide notice to the Market Regulation Department upon the pricing of the distribution.¹³ Additionally, members are prohibited from entering stabilizing bids pursuant to Rule 104 of Regulation M in the OTCBB.¹⁴

With respect to quotations in the ADF, FINRA's Operations Department may grant excused withdrawal status to a Registered Reporting ADF Market Maker, as defined in NASD Rule 4200A(a)(14), that is a distribution participant or affiliated purchaser in a distribution of an NMS stock in order to comply with the applicable restricted period under Regulation M.¹⁵ A member acting as manager (or in a similar capacity), or any member that is a distribution

¹⁰ See NASD Rule 6540(d)(1)(D)(iii).

¹¹ See NASD Rule 6540(d)(1)(D)(ii).

¹² See NASD Rule 6540(d)(1)(D)(i).

¹³ See NASD Rule 6540(d)(1)(D)(iv).

¹⁴ See NASD Rule 6540(d)(1)(D)(ii).

¹⁵ See NASD Rule 4619A(f).

participant or affiliated purchaser in a distribution that does not have a manager, must notify FINRA's ADF Operations and the Market Regulation Department of a prospective distribution and request a withdrawal of each market maker's quotations.¹⁶ Members also must submit a written request to ADF Operations and the Market Regulation Department to rescind the market maker's excused withdrawal status and provide notice of the date and time of the pricing of the offering, the offering price, and the time the offering terminated.¹⁷

2. Proposed New FINRA Rule 5190

FINRA proposed to consolidate and house all of its Regulation M-related notice requirements in a single rule, proposed new FINRA Rule 5190 (Notification Requirements for Offering Participants). The scope of the current rules and information required would be expanded, as necessary, to impose consistent notice requirements relating to distributions of listed and unlisted securities. FINRA believes that the proposed rule change would ensure that FINRA receives from its members pertinent distribution-related information in a timely fashion.

Proposed Rule 5190(c) sets forth the notice requirements applicable to distributions of listed and unlisted securities that are "covered securities" subject to a restricted period under Rule 101 or 102 of Regulation M.¹⁸ Specifically, proposed Rule 5190(c)(1)(A) would require members to determine, in accordance with Regulation M, whether a distribution is subject to a one-day or five-day restricted period under Rule 101 of Regulation M, and provide written notice

¹⁶ See NASD Rule 4619A(f)(1).

¹⁷ See NASD Rule 4619A(f)(3).

¹⁸ 17 CFR 242.100, definition of "covered securities."

to FINRA of the member's determination and the basis for such determination.¹⁹ Additionally, pursuant to proposed Rule 5190(c)(1)(A), members would be required to include in the written notice the contemplated date and time of commencement of the restricted period, identifying the distribution participants and affiliated purchasers.

Members would be required to provide such notice no later than the business day prior to the first complete trading session of the applicable restricted period, unless later notification is necessary under specific circumstances.²⁰ FINRA notes that where the principal market closes early, for example for a holiday, the shortened session would constitute a complete trading session for purposes of proposed Rule 5190. NASD Rule 2710(b)(10) requires that notice be provided at the time of filing the registration statement. However, for some distributions, particularly shelf offerings, the registration statement may be filed well in advance of commencement of the distribution. As a result, by the time the distribution takes place, the information previously provided by the member could be out-of-date or the ADTV or public

¹⁹ While the proposed rule change would place the onus of determining the applicable restricted period on the member for all distributions, as a practical matter, FINRA represented that it would accept notification by a member that the maximum five-day restricted period applies to a prospective distribution, without providing the basis for that determination. If, on the other hand, a member were to assert that a one day or no restricted period applied to a particular distribution, FINRA represented that it would require that the member demonstrate the basis for that determination.

²⁰ In most instances, FINRA represented it would expect to receive notification within the prescribed time frame, but may permit later notification in limited circumstances. Such determination would be made by the Market Regulation Department on a case-by-case basis. For example, there may be instances where the nature of the transaction has made it impossible to provide timely notice (*e.g.*, a private investment in public equity ("PIPE") offering is commenced and priced on the same day, and thus the member could not have provided notice on the business day prior to the first complete trading session of the applicable restricted period). NASD Rule 4619A(f)(1), which sets forth the notice and withdrawal of quotations requirements applicable to ADF participants for purposes of compliance with Regulation M, similarly contemplates later notification where necessary under the specific circumstances.

float levels could have changed, in which case a different restricted period would apply.

The proposed rule change would eliminate the express requirement under FINRA rules that members request a UAR and would instead permit FINRA to prescribe the form in which notice and the required information must be submitted to FINRA (including, as discussed above, notice of the member's independent determination regarding whether a restricted period applies).²¹ The proposed rule change also would eliminate the requirement in NASD Rule 2710(b)(10) that members submit a copy of the registration statement. FINRA represented that the Market Regulation Department does not rely on the registration statement in monitoring member quoting and trading activity for purposes of Regulation M compliance. Moreover, FINRA believes that this requirement could potentially suggest that the Regulation M-related requirements are applicable only to registered offerings when, in fact, certain unregistered offerings, e.g., private placements and PIPEs, are subject to Regulation M and FINRA's notice requirements.

Proposed Rule 5190(c)(1)(B) would require that upon pricing a distribution that is subject to a restricted period under Rule 101 of Regulation M, members provide written notice to FINRA and the following information: (1) the security name and symbol; (2) the type of security; (3) the number of shares offered; (4) the offering price; (5) the last sale before the

²¹ FINRA represented that it will announce the form and method of transmission in a Notice to be published on its Web site. For example, such form could include the request for a UAR in connection with distributions of Nasdaq-listed securities.

Additionally, FINRA notes that the Market Regulation Department monitors for purposes of compliance with Regulation M on behalf of the Nasdaq Exchange pursuant to a Regulatory Services Agreement (RSA). The Market Regulation Department will continue to generate UARs on behalf of the Nasdaq Exchange under the RSA to assist firms in determining the applicable restricted period, as well as applicable Nasdaq passive market making limits, under Regulation M with respect to Nasdaq-listed securities pursuant to Nasdaq Exchange rules.

distribution; (6) the pricing basis (e.g., the prior day closing price, a negotiated price, last sale, etc.); (7) the SEC effective date and time; (8) the trade date; and (9) the restricted period.

Consistent with proposed paragraph (c)(1)(A), members also would be required to identify the distribution participants and affiliated purchasers.

The notice under proposed Rule 5190(c)(1)(B) would be required to be submitted no later than the close of business the next business day following the pricing of the distribution, unless later notification is necessary under specific circumstances. NASD Rule 2710(b)(11) requires that notice of pricing be provided no later than the close of business the day the offering terminates. However, FINRA represented that current practice is for most members to provide immediate notice of pricing. FINRA believes that, in addition to being consistent with current practice, the proposed rule change would ensure that FINRA gets timely pricing information in instances where a distribution does not terminate for weeks or even months after pricing.

Proposed Rule 5190(c)(1)(C) would require that members provide written notice of the cancellation or postponement of any distribution for which prior notice of commencement of the restricted period has been provided to FINRA. Members would be required to provide such notice immediately upon the cancellation or postponement of the distribution.

Proposed Rule 5190(c)(2) would require that any member that is an issuer or selling security holder in a distribution of any security that is a covered security subject to a restricted period under Rule 102 of Regulation M comply with the notice requirements of proposed Rule 5190(c)(1), unless another member has assumed responsibility in writing for compliance therewith. FINRA believes that the proposed provision would ensure that FINRA receives notice of any distribution in which a member is participating as an issuer or selling security holder, to the extent that notice of such distribution has not already been provided under

proposed Rule 5190.

Proposed Rule 5190(d) sets forth the notice requirements applicable to distributions of listed and unlisted securities that are considered “actively traded” securities and thus are not subject to a restricted period under Rule 101 of Regulation M.²² In connection with such distributions, pursuant to proposed Rule 5190(d)(1), members would be required to provide written notice to FINRA of the member’s determination that no restricted period applies and the basis for such determination. Proposed Rule 5190(d)(1) would require that such notice be provided at least one business day prior to the pricing of the distribution, unless later notification is necessary under specific circumstances.

Proposed Rule 5190(d)(2) would require that upon pricing a distribution of a security that is considered “actively traded” under Rule 101 of Regulation M, members provide written notice to FINRA and the same pricing-related information that would be required under proposed paragraph (c)(1)(B) as discussed above. Also consistent with proposed paragraph (c)(1)(B), proposed Rule 5190(d)(2) would require members to identify the distribution participants and affiliated purchasers, and provide the required notice no later than the close of business the next business day following the pricing of the distribution, unless later notification is necessary under specific circumstances.²³

Under paragraphs (c)(1) and (d) of proposed Rule 5190, a member acting as manager (or

²² The rule text for Proposed Rule 5190(d)(1) states that members must make a determination that “no restricted period applies under Rule 101.” The Commission notes, however, that although distribution participants may rely on the actively-traded securities exception of Rule 101(c)(1) if applicable, a restricted period would otherwise apply. For example, the actively-traded securities exception is not available in Rule 102.

²³ FINRA represented that a member that is an issuer or selling security holder in a distribution of an actively traded security that is subject to a restricted period under Rule 102 of Regulation M would be required to comply with the notice requirements under proposed Rule 5190(c)(2).

in a similar capacity) of the distribution would have the obligation to submit the requisite notice to FINRA. However, if no member is acting as manager (or in a similar capacity), then each member that is a distribution participant or affiliated purchaser would be required to provide notice to FINRA, unless another FINRA member has assumed responsibility in writing for compliance with the notice requirement. This is consistent with the current approach under NASD Rule 2710(b)(10).²⁴

Finally, proposed Rule 5190(e) would require members to provide notice to FINRA of penalty bids or syndicate covering transactions in connection with an offering of an OTC Equity Security. Members would be required to provide notice to FINRA of their intention to conduct such activity prior to imposing the penalty bid or engaging in the first syndicate covering transaction, as well as other pertinent information, such as identification of the security, its symbol, and the date such activity will occur. In addition, members would be required to subsequently confirm such activity within one business day of completion, including identification of the security and its symbol, the total number of shares and the date(s) of such activity. The proposed provision is substantially similar to NASD Rule 6540(d)(1)(D)(iii). FINRA believes that by including these notice requirements in proposed Rule 5190, the proposed rule change would clarify that they apply to distributions of all OTC Equity Securities and are not limited to distributions of OTCBB-eligible securities.

In light of the foregoing, FINRA proposed to delete paragraphs (b)(10) and (11) from NASD Rule 2710 and Incorporated NYSE Rule 392 in its entirety. FINRA represented that the notice requirements of NASD Rule 2710(b)(10) and (11) and Incorporated NYSE Rule 392(a)

²⁴ Members would be required to update the notice required under proposed Rule 5190, as necessary (e.g., a manager would update the notice where distribution participants are added after commencement of the restricted period).

largely would be incorporated in proposed Rule 5190. Because Incorporated NYSE Rule 392(b) is specific to the NYSE marketplace, FINRA did not propose that these requirements become part of the Consolidated FINRA Rulebook.

3. Proposed Amendments to Marketplace Rules

FINRA also proposed to clarify the scope and application of the Regulation M-related requirements that are in the current OTCBB and ADF marketplace rules. FINRA proposed to adopt new FINRA Rule 6470 (Withdrawal of Quotations in an OTC Equity Security in Compliance with SEC Regulation M), which would: (1) require a member that is a distribution participant, affiliated purchaser, selling security holder or issuer in a distribution of an OTC Equity Security that is a covered security subject to Rule 101 or Rule 102 of Regulation M to withdraw all quotations in the security during the restricted period; and (2) prohibit the entry of stabilizing bids for the OTC Equity Security pursuant to Rule 104 of Regulation M. FINRA represented that proposed Rule 6470 is substantially similar to NASD Rule 6540(d)(1)(D)(ii) and would clarify that the requirements apply not only to OTCBB-eligible securities, but to all OTC Equity Securities quoted in any inter-dealer quotation system (i.e., OTCBB and Pink Sheets). Thus, under the proposed rule change, the Regulation M-related provisions would be deleted from the OTCBB rules (specifically, paragraphs (d)(1)(D), (E) and (F) would be deleted from NASD Rule 6540) and comparable requirements would be housed in either proposed Rule 5190, as discussed above, or proposed Rule 6470.

FINRA also proposed to make certain conforming changes to the Regulation M-related rules applicable to the ADF. Specifically, FINRA proposed to amend NASD Rule 4619A(f) to conform to the language and structure of proposed Rule 6470. Thus, a Registered Reporting ADF Market Maker that is a distribution participant, affiliated purchaser, selling security holder

or issuer in a distribution of an NMS stock that is a covered security subject to Rule 101 or 102 of Regulation M would be required to request an excused withdrawal of its quotations in the ADF in the offered security. FINRA believes that it is more appropriate to impose such obligation on the member that is posting the quotation, rather than require the manager of the distribution to do so on behalf of each member. FINRA further proposed to amend NASD Rule 4200A, which sets forth the definitions applicable to the ADF rules, to make technical and conforming changes such as adding necessary references to Regulation M and deleting definitions that are currently not used in the ADF rules.

FINRA believes that the proposed rule change will significantly improve the clarity of the current rules and enhance the information FINRA receives, which will better enable FINRA to monitor member OTC quoting and trading for purposes of Regulation M compliance.

FINRA will announce the implementation date of the proposed rule change in a Regulatory Notice to be published no later than 60 days following Commission approval.

III. Discussion and Findings

After careful review, the Commission finds that the proposed rule change is consistent with the requirements of the Act, and the rules and regulations thereunder that are applicable to a national securities association.²⁵ In particular, the Commission believes that the proposed rule change is consistent with the provisions of Section 15A(b)(6) of the Act,²⁶ which requires, among other things, that FINRA rules be designed to prevent fraudulent and manipulative acts and practices, to promote just and equitable principles of trade, and, in general, to protect

²⁵ In approving this proposal, the Commission has considered the proposed rule's impact on efficiency, competition, and capital formation. See 15 U.S.C. 78c(f).

²⁶ 15 U.S.C. 78o-3(b)(6).

investors and the public interest. The Commission believes that moving the Regulation M-related provisions of the rules under FINRA's jurisdiction in the manner proposed will provide greater clarity to members and aid in compliance. The Commission also notes that it has previously approved the portions of NASD Rule 2710 to be adopted as FINRA Rule 5110,²⁷ and the proposal merely moves that portion of Rule 2710 nearly verbatim from the NASD rulebook to the Consolidated FINRA Rulebook. The Commission believes that this move is primarily ministerial and only aids FINRA members in complying with existing obligations.

²⁷ See, e.g., Securities Exchange Act Release No. 48989 (December 23, 2003), 68 FR 75684 (December 31, 2003).

IV. Conclusion

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED, pursuant to Section 19(b)(2) of the Act,²⁸ that the proposed rule change (File No. SR-FINRA-2008-039) be, and hereby is, approved.

For the Commission, by the Division of Trading and Markets, pursuant to delegated authority.²⁹

Florence E. Harmon
Acting Secretary

²⁸ 15 U.S.C. 78s(b)(2).

²⁹ 17 CFR 200.30-3(a)(12).