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Nalco Holding CO
Form 425
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Pursuant to Rule 425 under the Securities Act of 1933
and deemed filed pursuant to Rule 14a-12 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934

Subject Company: Nalco Holding Company

On September 9, 2011, Ecolab Inc. began distributing the following message from Christophe Beck to employees.

To all associates:

This week and last, the Ecolab-Nalco Integration Planning Team came together for kickoff meetings in St. Paul, Minnesota. The team's plans and strategies will position us to realize the great potential of the Ecolab-Nalco merger. Together, we will create an \$11 billion+ global leader serving the hospitality, foodservice, healthcare, food and beverage, industrial and energy markets.

The Integration Planning Team includes leaders from both companies who will work full-time for approximately two years to bring the two companies together. During our kickoff meetings, the team drafted the new, combined organization's charter, objectives and key milestones. We are breaking the integration planning process into two phases:

- The first phase is called "Day One" and includes everything necessary to execute flawlessly on the first day of the merger.
- The second phase, which will continue from closing throughout 2012, focuses on longer-term plans and actions that will position the combined organization to achieve our full potential.

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This week, the Integration Planning Team met with senior executives of both companies and other key stakeholders to discuss and refine these plans.

Beyond preparing us for the monumental event of the merger, the Integration Planning Team kickoff meetings captured and built upon the positive energy that has characterized this deal since it first started coming together. Team members from Ecolab and Nalco quickly formed connections and embraced our mission to create a new organization that captures the best of both companies. Our approach, Winning as One, will guide all of our actions and decisions throughout the integration process and set the tone for the new company's culture:

During this integration planning phase, communications between Nalco and Ecolab must be channeled through the Integration Planning Team so that we can address questions and concerns; prevent redundant requests and projects; and ensure that we comply with all legal restrictions on our ability to communicate with Nalco prior to the merger.

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Please contact a member of the Integration Planning Team or email Integration@ecolab.com if you have questions about the integration process or about communicating with Nalco. Also, expect to receive regular updates regarding the Integration Planning Team's progress. We are committed to communicating to all associates whenever we have important news to share.

The Integration Planning Team's plans and strategies reflect our confidence in and enthusiasm about the potential of these two great companies to come together and quickly realize our potential to grow, to bring even more robust solutions to customers, and to make a difference for society. Together, we will address many of the world's most pressing needs—safe food supplies, infection prevention and clean water and energy. It will be a remarkable journey for us all.

Christophe Beck

Cautionary Statements Regarding Forward-Looking Information

This communication contains certain statements relating to future events and our intentions, beliefs, expectations and predictions for the future which are forward-looking statements as that term is defined in the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. Words or phrases such as "will likely result," "are expected to," "will continue," "is anticipated," "we believe," "we expect," "estimate," "project," "may," "will," "intend," "forecast" (including the negative or variations thereof) or similar terminology used in connection with any discussion of future plans, actions or events generally identify forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements include, but are not limited to, statements regarding the benefits of the Nalco merger, integration plans and expected synergies, the expected timing of completion of the merger, and anticipated future financial and operating performance and results, including estimates for growth. These statements are based on the current expectations of management of Ecolab and Nalco, as applicable. There are a number of risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from the forward-looking statements included in this communication. These risks and uncertainties include (i) the risk that the stockholders of Nalco may not adopt the merger agreement, (ii) the risk that the stockholders of Ecolab may not approve the issuance of Ecolab common stock to Nalco stockholders in the merger, (iii) the risk that the companies may be unable to obtain regulatory approvals required for the merger, or that required regulatory approvals may delay the merger or result in the imposition of conditions that could have a material adverse effect on the combined company or cause the companies to abandon the merger, (iv) the risk that the conditions to the closing of the merger may not be satisfied, (v) the risk that a material adverse change, event or occurrence may affect Ecolab or Nalco prior to the closing of the merger and may delay the merger or cause the companies to abandon the merger, (vi) the risk that an unsolicited offer by another company to acquire shares or assets of Ecolab or Nalco could interfere with or prevent the merger, (vii) problems that may arise in successfully integrating the businesses of the companies, which may result in the combined company not operating as effectively and efficiently as expected, (viii) the possibility that the merger may involve unexpected costs, unexpected liabilities or unexpected delays, (ix) the risk that the credit ratings of the combined company or its subsidiaries may be different from what the companies currently expect, (x) the risk that the businesses of the companies may suffer as a result of uncertainty surrounding the merger and (xi) the risk that disruptions from the transaction will harm relationships with customers, employees and suppliers. Other unknown or unpredictable factors could also have material adverse effects on future results, performance or achievements of Ecolab, Nalco and the combined company. For a further discussion of these and other risks and uncertainties applicable to the respective businesses of Ecolab and Nalco, see the Annual Reports on Form 10-K of Ecolab and Nalco for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2010 and the companies' other public filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC"). These risks, as well as other risks associated with the merger, are more fully discussed in the joint proxy statement/prospectus included in the Registration Statement on Form S-4 that Ecolab filed with the SEC on August 31, 2011 in connection with the merger. In light of these risks, uncertainties, assumptions and factors, the forward-looking events discussed in this communication may not occur. Readers are cautioned not to place undue reliance on these

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forward-looking statements, which speak only as of the date of this communication. Neither Ecolab nor Nalco undertakes, and each of them expressly disclaims, any duty to update any forward-looking statement whether as a result of new information, future events or changes in their respective expectations, except as required by law.

Additional Information and Where to Find it

Ecolab filed with the SEC on August 31, 2011 a registration statement on Form S-4 that includes a joint proxy statement of Ecolab and Nalco and that also constitutes a prospectus of Ecolab relating to the proposed transaction. WE URGE INVESTORS AND SECURITY HOLDERS TO READ THE REGISTRATION STATEMENT AND JOINT PROXY STATEMENT/PROSPECTUS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS BECAUSE THEY CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION about Ecolab, Nalco and the proposed merger. Investors and security holders may obtain these materials and other documents filed with the SEC free of charge at the SEC's website, www.sec.gov. In addition, copies of the registration statement and joint proxy statement/prospectus may be obtained free of charge by accessing Ecolab's website at www.ecolab.com by clicking on the Investor link and then clicking on the SEC Filings link or by writing Ecolab at 370 Wabasha Street North, Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55102, Attention: Corporate Secretary or by accessing Nalco's website at www.nalco.com by clicking on the Investors link and then clicking on the SEC Filings link or by writing Nalco at 1601 West Diehl Road, Naperville, Illinois 60563, Attention: Corporate Secretary, and security holders may also read and copy any reports, statements and other information filed by Ecolab or Nalco with the SEC, at the SEC public reference room at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 or visit the SEC's website for further information on its public reference room.

Participants in the Merger Solicitation

Ecolab, Nalco and certain of their respective directors, executive officers and other members of management and employees may be deemed to be participants in the solicitation of proxies in respect of the proposed transaction. Information regarding Ecolab's directors and executive officers is available in its proxy statement filed with the SEC by Ecolab on March 18, 2011 in connection with its 2011 annual meeting of stockholders, and information regarding Nalco's directors and executive officers is available in its proxy statement filed with the SEC by Nalco on March 14, 2011 in connection with its 2011 annual meeting of stockholders. Other information regarding the participants in the proxy solicitation and a description of their direct and indirect interests, by security holdings or otherwise, is contained in the registration statement and joint proxy statement/prospectus and other relevant materials filed by Ecolab and Nalco with the SEC.

Non-Solicitation

This communication does not constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy any securities, nor shall there be any sale of securities in any jurisdiction in which such offer, solicitation or sale would be unlawful prior to registration or qualification under the securities laws of any such jurisdiction.