

INVESTIGATION OF IMPORTED DRYWALL STATUS UPDATE, AUGUST 2009

I. Overview

This update describes new developments in the ongoing investigation of imported drywall and supplements the July 2009 status report provided to the Committee: (<http://www.cpsc.gov/info/drywall/drywallstatus07092009.pdf>.)

Since the July report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (“CPSC”) has received an additional 202 incident reports related to drywall, raising the total number of incident reports to 810. We also had reports from two new States, Pennsylvania and South Carolina, making it a total of 23 States and the District of Columbia, where problem drywall has been reported. The majority of the reports continue to be from Florida, Louisiana, and Virginia.

The focus of the federal drywall team has remained on both pursuing the scientific bases of this problem through the studies outlined in the July report and tracing the chain of commerce of the drywall. Highlights this past month include:

- Start of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory chamber testing of various drywall samples to isolate specific emissions.
- Start of the 50 home indoor air sampling program.
- Site visit to a Florida synthetic drywall manufacturing facility.
- The posting of summaries of 44 incident investigations conducted by CPSC on the *Drywall Information Center* Website.
- Completion of testing for radioactive phosphogypsum contamination in drywall through our State and federal partners.

II. Federal and State Coordination

Regular coordination and information sharing continues among the federal drywall team and our State partners. The CPSC is using new authority provided in the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act to enter into agreements to share confidential information with these State and federal partners.

CPSC hosted a call among attorneys general of impacted States to coordinate and exchange information about State-level efforts.

CPSC coordinated sampling and testing for radioactive phosphogypsum contamination in drywall with the Florida Department of Health and the EPA National Air and Radiation Environmental Laboratory.

The *Drywall Information Center* Website was updated to include summaries of 44 consumer incident investigations that describe health and corrosion concerns. For those

consumers who do not have access to the Internet, the CPSC also takes consumer calls regarding drywall on its Hotline and handled 128 such calls during the month of July.

III. International Efforts

CPSC has received approval from the Chinese for a visit to China and CPSC staff is working with the Chinese government to arrange an investigative visit beginning August 17, 2009. We have asked to visit several sites that we believe to be of interest.

IV. Progress in the Investigation

A. Investigation Into Scope of Affected Homes and Chain of Commerce

CPSC continues to analyze the information received from consumers, builders, importers, manufacturers and suppliers of drywall to determine how much imported drywall is affected and where that drywall has been installed. To date, CPSC staff has confirmed 6,211,200 sheets of Chinese drywall were imported into the U.S., plus 28,778 sheets imported into Guam, Saipan, and American Samoa during 2006. The staff is continuing to verify more shipments.

CPSC is hiring temporary support personnel to bring more resources to bear on this aspect of the investigation and we are researching technology to map affected properties and the chain of commerce.

B. Technical Investigation

Engineering, health and safety analyses continue as planned and discussed in the July status report. CPSC engineering staff has visited seven homes in Florida, Louisiana and Virginia, including three homes in July, to harvest samples of electrical, plumbing and safety systems. For example, to date, we have gathered 80 electrical receptacles, 19 switches, 22 smoke alarms, and 18 samples of copper piping, among other such components. We continue to have no confirmed fire incidents involving Chinese drywall.

EPA is conducting elemental analyses of 15 drywall samples, including the 14 samples mentioned in our July report and another sent to them on July 16, 2009. EPA has set a tentative date for completing its analyses of drywall samples by late August. We anticipate that after approximately 30 days of analysis, review and interpretation of the data, the interagency group will have findings by the end of September.

In July, we became aware of allegations of the use of radioactive phosphogypsum in some imported drywall. Radioactive materials are outside of the CPSC's authorities under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act, and as such are also outside of our expertise. CPSC staff immediately arranged for testing in the radiation labs of our partner agencies in the State of Florida and with the EPA, and provided samples to these laboratories for analysis. The data from these tests is under scientific review by the interagency technical committee. The federal drywall team hopes to report the results of this work in the coming days.

The chamber studies at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory to isolate drywall emissions, as described in the July report, have begun and will continue as planned. Similarly, the in-home indoor air sampling study by the contractor, Environmental Health and Engineering, has begun and is expected to be completed by early September 2009. The evaluation of the results is expected to be complete by late September 2009.

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