

INVESTIGATION OF IMPORTED DRYWALL STATUS UPDATE, SEPTEMBER 2009

I. Overview

This update describes new developments in the ongoing investigation of imported drywall and supplements the previous reports provided to the Committee:

- <http://www.cpsc.gov/info/drywall/drywallstatus07092009.pdf>
- <http://www.cpsc.gov/info/drywall/drywallstatus08112009.pdf>

Since the August report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (“CPSC”) has received an additional 382 incident reports related to drywall, raising the total number of incident reports to 1192. We also had reports from one new state, South Carolina, making a total of 24 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 pursuing the scientific bases of this problem, through the several studies described in previous reports, and tracing the chain of commerce of the drywall. Highlights this past month:

- conducted investigative visit to China including meetings with government officials,
- completed principal field work for 50 home indoor air sampling program,
- coordinated a rapid state and federal response to allegations of radioactive phosphogypsum in Chinese drywall,
- followed-up with more than 500 consumers to update the data submitted in their initial incident reports and
- completed 75 “in-depth investigations” with another 20 in progress.

II. Federal and State Coordination

Regular coordination and information sharing continues among the federal drywall team and our state partners. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has joined the federal partnership with CPSC, EPA, CDC, and HUD as a regular participant in information sharing.

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

The CPSC updated the *Drywall Information Center* website to include a new report form that allows consumers to directly input detailed information about imported drywall in their homes. For those consumers who do not have access to the Internet, the CPSC also takes consumer calls regarding drywall on its Hotline and handled 158 such calls during the month of August.

III. International Efforts

CPSC staff visited China and met with Chinese government officials as well as management from several sites that we believe to be of interest. The team inspected gypsum mines and drywall manufacturing plants in China with Chinese government officials. During the trip, the team collected samples of raw materials and finished products from both mine/manufacturing establishments and retailers and met with the China Building Materials Academy, a state-owned research and development institute.

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 that during 2006, 6,997,456 sheets of Chinese drywall were imported into the U.S. and 28,778 sheets were imported into Guam, Saipan, and American Samoa. The staff is continuing to verify more shipments through our partnerships with CBP and ICE, as well as by investigating importers and distributors.

B. Technical Investigation

Engineering, health and safety analyses continue as planned and discussed in earlier reports. CPSC engineering staff has visited ten homes in Florida, Louisiana and Virginia to harvest samples of electrical, plumbing and safety systems. To date, we have gathered 110 electrical receptacles, 31 switches, 5 circuit breakers, 26 smoke alarms, and 18 samples of copper piping, among other such components. Eighty pieces of drywall have been collected from affected homes. We continue to have no confirmed fire incidents involving Chinese drywall, but are investigating all reports on this subject.

EPA is conducting elemental analyses of 15 drywall samples. EPA expects to complete its analyses of drywall samples in the next two weeks. An interagency technical committee has been established which will review all test results and interpretations for the drywall investigation to ensure sound science is employed. We anticipate that the technical committee will complete its review and report its findings to the CPSC in October.

In July, CPSC staff 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 we provided samples to these laboratories for analysis. The data from these tests were reviewed by the interagency technical committee. The results along with the technical review showing that no radiological hazard was found were released on our *Drywall Information Center*.

The chamber studies at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory to isolate drywall emissions, as described in the July report, have begun and remain in progress. Additional samples collected in China will be added to the study and additional time will be needed for that work. For the in-home indoor air sampling study, the contractor, Environmental Health and Engineering, has already conducted air sampling in all 50 homes, but additional long-term sampling has been added to the tests to improve detection capabilities, and those longer-term tests will be completed later this month. The evaluation of the results is expected to be complete by October. The results of both of these studies will be evaluated by the technical committee prior to public release.

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