

## **CPSC/EPA/HUD/CDC/ATSDR Press Statement on Initial Chinese Drywall Studies**

Since the early spring, the federal government has dedicated significant resources to helping families affected by the drywall issue in their homes. The government has been and continues to be committed to providing answers and solutions to these homeowners. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR), and numerous state departments of health have been working together to investigate and analyze how Chinese made drywall entered into the country, where it was used, what is in it, and what impact it may have on human health and corrosion of electrical and fire safety components.

This is a complicated problem, and we have several studies and other activities underway to help bring the best possible science to bear. The first sets of data released today start to explain differences between Chinese and non-Chinese drywall, but more remains to be learned. We are sharing what we know at this point and are outlining the next steps as we continue to work to answer homeowners' questions about what is causing the effects reported and observed.

### **Initial Results of 3 Studies of Chinese and Non-Chinese made drywall**

The studies summarized below have discovered certain differences between Chinese and non-Chinese drywall. Further studies must be completed, however, to determine the nexus between the drywall and the reported health and corrosion issues. Preliminarily, the studies show:

1. *Elemental and Chemical Testing:* Federal scientists analyzed pieces of drywall to discover what chemicals it contains. Some differences were found between the Chinese and non-Chinese drywall. Of the samples tested, the study shows the presence of elemental sulfur in Chinese but not in non-Chinese drywall, and it also shows higher concentrations of strontium in Chinese drywall than in non-Chinese drywall. Testing conducted over the summer by federal and state agency radiation laboratories found no radiation safety risk to families in homes built with manufactured drywall. The strontium found in this drywall does not pose a radiological risk.
2. *Chamber Studies:* The second set of tests is being conducted by the nationally-respected Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBL), which is carrying out chamber testing on emissions from samples of Chinese and non-Chinese drywall into the air. These tests are still underway, but we are sharing preliminary findings. Early results show that Chinese drywall emits volatile sulfur compounds at a higher rate than the U.S. made drywall. More tests and analyses are underway at LBL to determine the specific chemical compounds that are being emitted.
3. *Indoor Air Studies:* In analyzing indoor air results in 10 homes in Florida and Louisiana, federal and Florida Department of Health researchers were looking for hydrogen sulfide, carbon disulfide and carbonyl sulfide, which

have been suspected of causing "rotten egg" smells and sulfur-like corrosion of copper and other metals in the homes.

The study found that sulfur gases were either not present or were present in only limited or occasional concentrations inside the homes, and only when outdoor levels of sulfur compounds in the air were elevated.

The indoor air study did lead to a preliminary finding of detectable concentrations of two known irritant compounds, called acetaldehyde and formaldehyde. These irritant compounds were detected in homes both with and without Chinese drywall, and at concentrations that could worsen conditions such as asthma in sensitive populations, when air conditioners were not working or turned off. The levels of formaldehyde were not unusual for new homes and were higher in homes where air conditioners were not working or turned off.

Although formaldehyde was found, when the air conditioning was turned on, it was not at levels that have been found to cause health symptoms.

The initial indoor air studies were conducted on a small and limited sample of homes in Florida and Louisiana to identify and measure contaminants and to inform the development of a federal and state indoor air testing protocol. The studies released today, and the additional study reports scheduled for release next month, once completed, will collectively help to develop a final standard federal and state protocol for testing homes and to identify a nexus between the presence of Chinese drywall and the reported health and corrosive issues.

### **Next Steps**

Although we know more now than we did just a few weeks ago, we are continuing to learn as much as we can in order to respond to homeowners' concerns with the best scientific information. We expect to have more information to share in late November. At that time, we will have more information from CPSC's 50-home air sampling project conducted through Environmental Health and Engineering (EH&E), a nationally-respected environmental testing firm based in Massachusetts. The report of our 50-home indoor air study will include additional testing results, including the exposure of small copper and silver metal strips. These strips are being used to help determine if there is a relationship between homes with Chinese drywall and corrosion of metal components in those homes. This study is also looking for certain sulfur gases at lower levels than could be detected in the initial studies.

Also in November, we expect to release a preliminary engineering analysis of potential electrical and fire safety issues related to corrosion.

All of the federal and state partners will continue to work on behalf of the families affected by this Chinese drywall issue. We are committed to providing answers to homeowners. As new information becomes available, we will share it as quickly as possible.

The federal interagency working group is actively talking to Congressional and White House officials to consider legislative and other means of helping families affected by and struggling with this issue.

### **Recommendations to Affected Homeowners**

To date, CPSC has received nearly 1900 reports from 30 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico from consumers and homeowners concerned about problem drywall in their home. Homeowners who believe they may be affected by this issue should immediately report the problem to CPSC by calling 800-638-2772 or logging on to [www.CPSC.gov](http://www.CPSC.gov).

Federal and state health experts suggest these steps to improve indoor air quality and to reduce exposure to substances that can cause health concerns:

- Open windows as much as possible to let in fresh air.
- Keep the temperature inside homes at the lowest comfortable setting.
- Run the air conditioner or dehumidifier.
- Also, spend as much time outdoors in fresh air as possible.
- Do not smoke, and especially do not smoke indoors. Cigarette smoke contains, among other contaminants, formaldehyde.

To read the technical research reports or for more information, log on to [www.DrywallResponse.gov](http://www.DrywallResponse.gov).