



TECHNICAL BULLETIN

April 2009

TOPIC: Chinese Drywall

In recent months, an issue has been brought to public attention that relates to homeowners and inspectors alike. The issue is in regards to Chinese drywall. Here are the facts that we know of:

Contaminated Chinese drywall came into this country beginning in approximately 2002 and continued through at least 2006. If the home is older than this date range, contamination is possible but significantly less likely. There have been considerably more reports of contaminated homes in Florida, but reports have also come from Virginia, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North and South Carolina, Texas and the remote possibility of the drywall being shipped to parts of Canada. Some published data has attempted to trace the contaminated drywall to other states to which it was shipped. Records show that shipments of drywall arrived through the ports of Florida and New York.

Contaminated drywall contains high amounts of sulfur, which has the tendency to emit a rotten egg smell and turns copper components like wiring, plumbing and internal HVAC equipment black, which leads to corrosion of those components. Other reports from homeowners so far have reported tarnished silverware, tarnished metal light fixtures and problems with electronic components of the home. Reports show that the entire interior surface may not have been covered with the problematic drywall. In other words, Chinese drywall could have been used in walls but not on the ceilings, which could prohibit from a visual perspective identifying the product.

Our Standards of Practice generally state that we are performing “a visual non-invasive inspection of readily accessible components.” In the majority of cases, ceilings are covered with insulation making it difficult to see the label from the manufacturer on the back side.



So far, officials representing the drywall manufacturer state that the sulfur-smelling drywall poses no serious health effects; there are reports from homeowners that state the smell is so strong they cannot live in the home. Investigations have shown there are at least five different and distinct types of Chinese drywall with high sulfur content. One of the manufacturers, “KNAUF,” stamped their name on their product. None of the other manufacturers put their name on their product (which is not really surprising!); however, the vast majority of contaminated drywall is labeled “Made in China.” If your nose leads you to a sulfur smell, and the drywall is marked with this label, this is a strong indication of defective drywall.



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The drywall thicknesses being described are 1/2 inch and 5/8 inch with the sheet length being 4 feet x 8 feet, but the majority of the sheets is 12 feet in length.

A national consumer advocacy group is claiming that the scope is much broader. Thomas Martin, president of the Washington, D.C.-based America's Watchdog, which is partnering with high-powered attorneys across the country, said "We think this could literally turn out to be the worst case of sick houses in U.S. history."

The Herald-Tribune reported on Feb. 1 that shipping records showed at least 550 million pounds of Chinese drywall were offloaded at U.S. ports since 2006 - enough to build 60,000 average-size homes.

Gases being emitted from the Chinese-made material have been tied to corrosion and blackening of pipes in homes. Some Southwest Florida residents said the gases have also been harmful to their health, a charge the builders and manufacturers dispute. Several lawsuits seeking class-action status have been filed, including one in Sarasota County and another in federal court.

NPI's Corporate Position on Dealing with this Developing Issue



Inspectors need to look closely for all the symptoms listed previously in a home that may contain Chinese drywall. If the home has a strong sulfur odor, inspectors need to make a concentrated effort to try to determine if in fact it is Chinese drywall. Look for signs of blackened copper components. In attics where the backside of drywall may be accessible in ceilings or fire wall separations, look for the labels. Inspectors should pull back insulation in an effort to see the back side of the drywall. Because this is classified as an environmental

issue, further evaluation and testing should be performed by a qualified expert. In order to try to confirm whether a home has Chinese drywall in it a more invasive inspection is going to have to be conducted. Check to see what your E& O insurance policy will cover when addressing issues related to Chinese drywall. **Even with the following disclaimer statement inspectors need to make a concerted effort to look for it.**

We recommend adding the disclaimer statement to your pre-inspection agreement:

"National Property Inspections expresses no opinion about the subject property beyond what is set forth in its Home Inspection Report. The client may wish to obtain other types of inspections, such as environmental-related inspections, regarding mold, indoor- air quality or other environmental issues, or **the identification or testing of "Chinese Drywall,"** all of which are beyond the scope of this inspection and are not addressed in the Home Inspection report."

For additional information go to: <http://www.chinesedrywall.com/>