



Home Tips



• CHRISTIAN BUILDING INSPECTORS, INC., 3697 HABERSHAM LANE, DULUTH, GEORGIA 30096, 770-849-0920 • MAY 2009 •



Chinese Drywall?

What is the scoop on the problem with Chinese drywall? We heard it gives off a gas that will eat through television electrical circuits and create leaks in plumbing pipes.

Tests have shown that Chinese drywall emits sulfur gases that can corrode copper coils, electrical circuits and plumbing components.

Atlanta attorney Robert J. Fleming states, "While the initial lawsuits are filed in Florida, evidence is emerging that strongly suggest some single family homes in Georgia and specifically in Atlanta subdivisions built from 2001 to present contain the defective product." For details see http://www.atlantainjurylawyersblog.com/2009/03/georgia_homes_may_be_tainted_b.html.

The following article is by Sandy Bourseau, ASHI communications director:

Once strictly a local concern, suddenly drywall imported from China is being discussed coast to coast. Thanks to nationwide media hype and a proliferation of lawsuits, home



inspectors, not to mention consumers, are finding it difficult to sort Chinese drywall facts from fiction.

The Department of Health in the state of Florida, where the controversy first surfaced several years ago, appears to be on the fact-finding forefront. It has published preliminary lab findings, announced an ongoing study and created a web site to answer consumers' questions.

One of the questions on the consumer site is: "How do I know if my house has Chinese drywall?" The answer concludes with the following: "The bottom line is we think the question should really be 'Does my house have corrosion problems?' Now, that's an answer home inspectors can relate to.

Consumers with questions about Chinese drywall can be directed to the regularly updated website at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/indoor-air/drywallFAQ.html> on <http://www.floridashealth.com>. Some of the corrosion problems that have been attributed to the presence of Chinese drywall are described in the requirements for a home to be included in <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/community/indoor-air/casedefinition.html>.

Two or more of the following conditions must be present on a house constructed 2004 to the present and three or more on a house constructed prior to 2004 for the house to be accepted by the Florida Department of Health for its investigation.

1. The presence of sulfur-like or other unusual odors.
2. Confirmed presence of Chinese-manufactured drywall in the home.
3. Observed copper corrosion indicated by black, sooty coating of un-insulated copper pipe leading to the air handling unit present in the garage or mechanical closet of the home.
4. Documented failure of air conditioner evaporator coil (located inside the air handling unit.)
5. Confirmation by an outside expert or professional for the presence of premature copper corrosion on un-insulated copper wires and/or air conditioner evaporator coils (inside the air handling unit.)

The department is currently identifying and assessing potential human health hazards related to the phenomenon of rapid and recurring corrosion of metals inside homes. It issued a preliminary lab report on March 19th.

More information is available including the "Hazard Assessment of Copper Corrosion and Air-Conditioner Evaporator Coil Failures Possibly Associated with Imported Drywall" by going to the website: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Environment/community/indoor-air/drywall.html>.

Lawsuits have been filed in Florida, California, Louisiana and Alabama. The Office of the Attorney General of Florida is investigating Knauf Plasterboard Tianjian, a Chinese subsidiary of Knauf, a German company, which produced some of the Chinese drywall used in Florida. Millions of pounds of drywall were imported from China to meet the demand in the southern states, much of it after the hurricanes in 2004. Dragas Companies in Virginia recently confirmed that it used Chinese drywall in some of its homes as well.

ASHI's lobbyist Randall Pence, Capitol Hill Advocates, is checking on possible federal activities related to the drywall.

ASHI member Michael Conley shared some of the challenges he has faced inspecting homes in Florida in the March ASHI Reporter at <http://www.ashireporter.org/articles/articles.aspx?id=1630>.

