

SPECIAL REPORT

# Tainted Chinese Drywall Contaminating U.S. Homes

DRYWALL CONTINUED FROM A1

Shipments totaling more than 550 million pounds of the product have entered the country since 2006, according to data from PIERS (Port Import Export Reporting Service). According to PIERS, the primary source of U.S. waterborne import-export trade data, the last known shipment landed in Long Beach, California on March 12 this year.

"This is more than a nationwide problem, this is a serious problem," said Michael Foreman of Foreman and Associates, a construction consultancy firm in Sarasota, Florida.

In the last few months alone, Foreman has recently undertaken more than 150 analyses of homes. "Approximately 50 percent of those [houses] that we look at are affected," he said.

"It's very easy when you walk into a house and the odor is there—it's a no-brainer."

The odor is not always present in houses with defective drywall. Foreman's company carries out 18-30 analyses per week and they are booked out three weeks in advance.

**Federal Response**

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says they are aware of the health complaints triggered by Chinese drywall.

"We are concerned about the possible risk to human health and we believe more data and analysis are needed to move forward," said Dave Ryan, a press officer with the EPA in Washington, D.C. Ryan said the EPA is helping the CPSC investigation and offering technical advice to federal and state agencies.

CPSC spokesperson Scott Wolfson said they found out about the tainted drywall in late December 2008 or early January 2009. An investigation team was sent to Florida late March this year to take samples.

"We responded as quickly as we could," Wolfson said. "This is a priority situation for CPSC."

The investigation team included a toxicologist, an electrical engineering specialist, a compliance division manager, and a fire engineer. The fire expert was present to check any effects the drywall has on smoke alarms and fire safety components.

The CPSC were unable to specify when results would be available.

"We need to be able to get to the heart of the matter," Wolfson said. "This is a very complicated issue, nothing similar has happened."

Sen. Nelson, a member of the Senate Commerce Committee which oversees the CPSC, said, "The agency is doing too little, too late to help residents of Florida and other states who are reporting serious health and safety problems associated with living in homes built with tainted drywall."

**Class Action Suit**

While the federal response is still in the making, those who have been affected are banding

*'It will be the biggest catastrophe in the U.S. housing market history.'*

—Jordan Chaikin, lawyer with Florida firm Parker Waichman Alonso LLP

together for legal retribution. Lead lawyer for the homeowners, Jordan Chaikin of personal injury firm Parker Waichman Alonso LLP, filed a class action lawsuit late February.

"This matter is extremely urgent," said Chaikin. "We've got people who are living in their homes who are affected by this, who have nowhere to go. They can't afford to rent somewhere else, and who are afraid of ruining their credit and ruining everything, and losing what they've worked so hard for."

He believes every state will be affected.

"It will be the biggest catastrophe in the U.S. housing market history," asserts Chaikin. "Without a doubt."

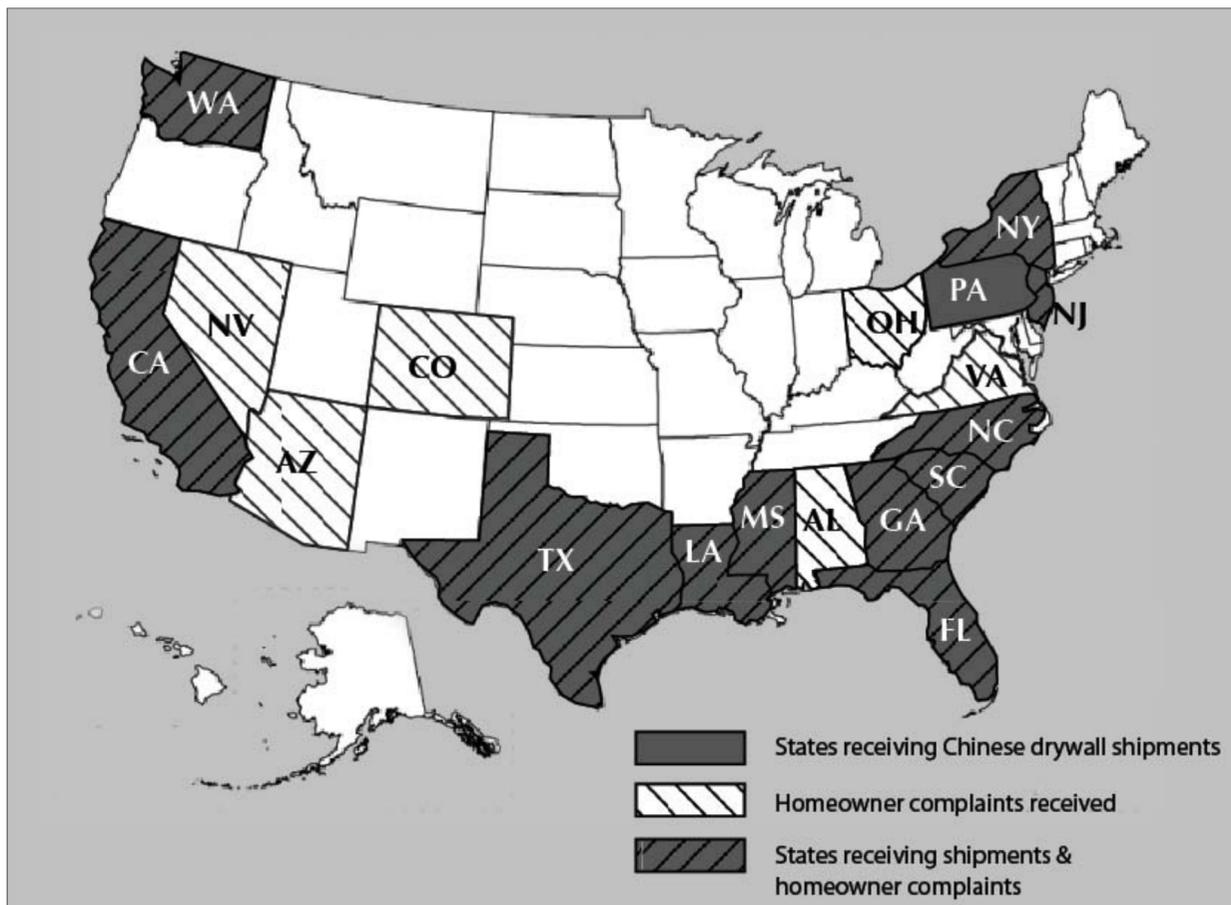
Chaikin's firm, and the firms they are co-counseling with have filed 15 to 20 class action suits. "Who we are going after is all of the Chinese manufacturers, all of the distributors and all of the suppliers of the Chinese drywall," he said.

"This isn't the first defective product that we're dealing with," said Chaikin. "China, unfortunately is very poorly regulated, and we, Americans have suffered in the last several years, from defective Chinese products—whether it's been defective pet food, or baby formula, or toys, or paint, or in this case drywall."

Foreman agrees. "There's no doubt in my mind that there's going to be more defective products, because of the process of manufacturing and the materials and the lack of accountability or certificates that have some meaning."

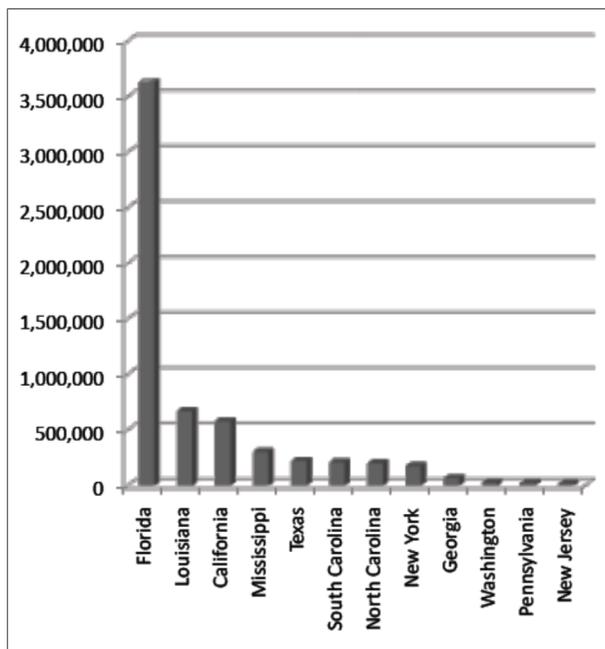
He said he also has concerns about the lack of border inspections for products. "The port authority guys are instructed to accept the [import] documentation without question, unless they can validate there's a question in the documentation."

"So you got a certificate—was that checked at the factory, was there a third party, was there someone inspecting it? I don't think so in a lot of cases because one of the companies we've been tracking, the Tianjin Company, that's actually owned by the [Chinese] government. So I don't need to explain that to you."



TOXIC MATERIALS: The last known shipment of Chinese-produced drywall was delivered to Long Beach, Calif., on March 12, 2009, according to Port Import Export Reporting Service (PIERS). PIERS is the primary source of U.S. waterborne import-export trade data and a leading provider of global trade intelligence solutions. GRAPHIC BY THE EPOCH TIMES

## Estimated number of drywall boards by state



DATA FROM THE PORT IMPORT EXPORT REPORTING SERVICES (PIERS)

## How do I know if my home contains tainted Chinese drywall?

**Common Health Complaints Include:**

- Nose bleeds
- Headaches
- Coughs
- Upper respiratory or sinus issues
- Eye irritation
- Tiredness
- Difficulty breathing
- Aching body
- Rashes
- Family pets may have died

**Common Building-Related Issues Include:**

- Continuous failure of air conditioning coils, or HVAC units beyond anything normal. Copper coils have turned black, or a grayish black
- Oven, or stove elements, or refrigerator coils may have failed a number of times
- Failure of electrical appli-

ances—computer, TV sets, radios, DVD players, smoke detectors microwave information display panels may have failed

- Corroded, or black electrical wiring
- High end silver jewelry, or silver plated utensils may be tarnished
- Light bulbs in homes with toxic Chinese drywall may burn out at a much faster rate than specified by the manufacturer
- Smell of rotten eggs

**Who to Contact:**

- Your doctor
- State health department
- Homeowners Consumer Center/America's Watchdog
- Your local government representatives

SOURCE: Homeowners Consumer Center at 866-714-6466.

# A Personal Battle With Chinese Drywall

Epoch Times Staff

PARKLAND, Fla.—Today, she's running a fever and declines to have her picture taken. The chemical smell that permeates her home draws the attention of anyone who visits, including the mayor. The guesthouse is the worst.

"This was our beautiful home," said Mary Ann Schultheis. "We picked out colors. We had a decorator come in. Now it's a nightmare. It's not happy. It's not healthy."

Schultheis blames it on the Chinese drywall. After putting the house up for sale in January, she found out that the cause of a problem with the air conditioner was the drywall, or gypsum, used in the walls. Schultheis decided that she couldn't sell their Parkland, Florida, home until the issue was resolved.

"I feel trapped. I can't get out," she said. Her husband has doubled his reliance on asthma inhalers since moving into the house. She has had severe sinus infections, requiring courses of antibiotics. Nosebleeds are common, as are dizziness and throat irritation.

The couple bought two new plasma TVs since moving in two years ago. One has been fixed twice, the other one once. Light bulbs that usually last years fizzle out quickly.

The copper coils in an air-conditioning unit replaced one year ago are now black and so corroded that they leaked Freon, an odorless refrigerant that in high concentrations could cause asphyxiation.

"We don't know what to do. I've moved a lot. It's my seventh home. It's the one I love the most," Schultheis said.

The Chinese-produced drywall is reportedly made with "fly ash," a waste material from coal-fired power plants. These materials can leak into the air and emit sulfur compounds, including sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide. Sulfuric acid has been known to dissolve solder joints and to corrode coils and copper tubing, creating leaks.

It was an air conditioner repairman who tipped her off that something was in the air. The AC was making noise, and its coils were black. The repairman told Schultheis that he had noticed a similar phenomenon in other homes in the area.

Giving her two pieces of copper tubing, he told her to put one in a sealed plastic bag and the other in the closet with the AC unit. Now, about three months later, the piece of copper that was exposed to the air is beginning to turn black.

They had planned to stay in the home for five years. Now Schultheis



AT A LOSS: Mr. Schultheis and his family may have to leave their home in Florida due to the health risks posed by toxic drywall. LINDA LI/THE EPOCH TIMES

is asking her mortgage company for forbearance.

"We need to be able to get out of here to go where it's safe and healthy while our homes are repaired," she said. But the financial repercussions of leaving could be disastrous.

"If we have to take a loss, we will now. I don't know if we'll have credit if we walk away [from our mortgage]. This is a catastrophe," she said.



TAINTED: Mary Ann Schultheis shows the black residue that has formed on the copper AC coils in her home. LINDA LI/THE EPOCH TIMES