

Inspector Secrets - Chinese Drywall

Chinese drywall imported between 2001 and 2008 was determined to have issues with chemical emissions, especially elemental sulfur, strontium, hydrogen sulfide, carbonyl sulfide and carbon disulfide. These emissions were causing metal corrosion or blackening of copper wires and copper air conditioning coils. Health complaints have included rotten egg odors, itching of the eyes and skin, nosebleeds, headaches and difficulty breathing.

Most drywall used in the U.S. is American-made, but with the recent housing boom, additional material needed to be imported from China. This included a significant increase in imports between 2005 and 2008 as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita ravaged homes.

Problems have also been reported in the Southeast, California, Arizona, Wyoming and New York. In Washington, an estimated 270 homes may have been built with the affected drywall.

Drywall shipments from China

Since 2006, more than 550 million pounds of drywall were imported from China into the United States, enough to make tens of thousands of houses. Sixty percent of Chinese drywall came into Florida, through seven ports, including Port Manatee.

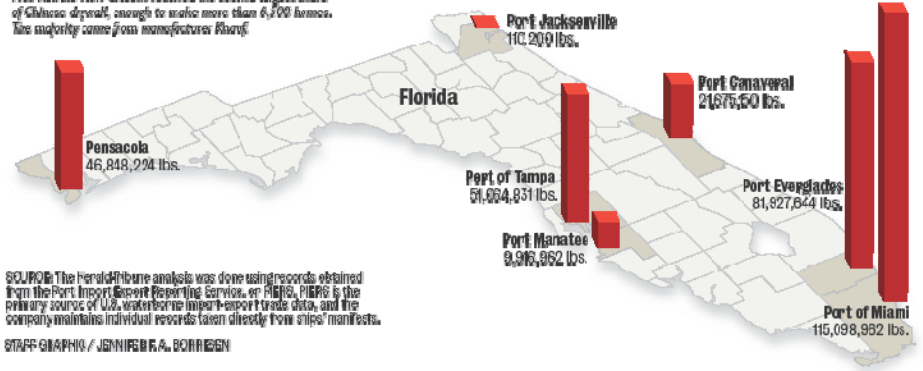
States importing at least 1 million pounds of drywall from China since Jan. 1, 2006.



Drywall experts say a standard 12-foot by 4-foot drywall board weighs about 90 pounds on average. A typical 2,000-square-foot home uses about 900 such boards. By that estimation, enough Chinese drywall entered the U.S. since 2006 to potentially make more than 61,000 homes, and more than 38,000 in Florida alone.

	Number of pounds	Est. number of drywall boards	Est. number of homes
FL	326,841,873 lbs.	3,630,000	36,000
LA	60,833,801 lbs.	688,000	7,000
CA	5,934,377 lbs.	67,000	6,000
MS	23,261,276 lbs.	265,000	3,000
TX	19,908,897 lbs.	221,000	2,000
NC	18,050,780 lbs.	201,000	2,000
NY	16,864,470 lbs.	195,000	1,900
CA	6,050,370 lbs.	67,000	670
WA	4,437,481 lbs.	50,000	570
PA	2,173,344 lbs.	24,000	240
NJ	1,820,760 lbs.	20,000	170

Post-Katrina New Orleans received the second-largest share of Chinese drywall, enough to make more than 6,500 homes. The majority come from manufacturers Knauf.



While the gypsum in drywall generally is mined, more and more drywall is being made of gypsum created from a chemical process using lime, or limestone, and gas from coal-fired power plants where sulfur and other contaminants is removed. It's still unclear what went wrong with the drywall.

At this time there are two tests to analyze drywall samples - FTIR, or Fourier Transformed Infrared Spectroscopy, measures infrared light passing through or reflected by the sample. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, FTIR is 98% reliable in identifying carbonate sulfide, a marker unique to defective drywall. XRF, or X-Ray Fluorescence, uses X-Rays to identify strontium, another unique marker. The CPSC has identified this test as being 99% effective. Handheld units like the one above are readily available, but out of the price range for most home inspectors. One source, www.matcoinc.com will process a mailed in sample for \$200.00 with a 10 day turn around. Additional samples are \$160.00. Another testing resource is www.lakelandlabs.com.



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