

# Imported Drywall and Your Home

## Background

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has received 3,850 reports from residents in 42 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, and Puerto Rico who believe their health symptoms or the corrosion of certain metal components in their homes are related to the presence of drywall produced in China. State and local health authorities also received similar reports.

At this time, experts believe that defective imported drywall was installed in homes built or remodeled from 2001–2008. The number and location of all affected or potentially affected homes are not yet known.

The CPSC is leading the federal investigation into complaints about imported drywall. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are providing technical support to the CPSC and several state health departments.

## How can I find out if my home has imported drywall?

The CPSC and Florida Department of Health developed guides for residents to help them identify drywall problems. Three general areas to consider include:

- **Corrosion:** Are any of your home's copper pipes, plumbing fixtures, or uninsulated electrical wires at light switches or receptacles corroded? Have your air conditioner evaporator coils failed early? Metal or copper corrosion of these types may mean there is defective drywall in your home.
- **Odor:** Does your home have an odor that smells like rotten eggs, matches, or fireworks? A sulfur odor in the home might mean defective drywall is present.
- **Label:** Can you see the back side of your drywall? Some drywall from China is stamped with "Made in China" on the back. However, some Chinese drywall does not have a label or markings.

For more detailed guidance, you should refer to the guides available here:

CPSC: <http://www.cpsc.gov/info/drywall/how.html>

Florida: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/indoor-air/inspections.html>



National Center for Environmental Health  
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry



## What has been found in the air of homes that contain imported drywall?

CPSC indoor air test results have found levels of reactive sulfur gases, including hydrogen sulfide and carbonyl sulfide, that are higher in homes that contain imported drywall than those that do not. However, these gases have been found at very low levels not known to be associated with any health effects.

CPSC's studies show higher emissions of reactive sulfur gases in imported drywall than in drywall manufactured in North America. Emission rates were highest for hydrogen sulfide, followed by sulfur dioxide. The same trend holds true for volatile sulfur compounds. The CPSC is using computer models to estimate levels in indoor air.

Many sulfur-based compounds occur naturally in the environment, such as in swamps. Paper mills, the textile industry, petroleum and natural gas extraction, and other industries produce these gases as waste products. Cigarette smoke, septic tanks, wastewater treatment, and automobiles also emit these compounds.

Other compounds that are typically present in indoor air were found in both homes that contain imported drywall and homes that do not. Sources of these compounds include new carpeting and furniture, pressed plywood and particle board, glues, paints, and cooking.

## How can imported drywall affect my health?

Compounds found in the CPSC's evaluations of the drywall were not at levels historically linked to human health effects. Some people are more sensitive than others to possible chemical exposures. An exposure that causes no problems for some people can make other people sick or uncomfortable.

Sulfur gases have unpleasant odors. You can detect these odors at levels that are not known to cause health problems. Some people are sensitive to odor and may feel sick to their stomachs but they will not suffer lasting health effects. Sulfur gases might also irritate the eyes, nose, and throat. Other irritating materials are in both outside and indoor air. These include ozone, smog, mold, dust, allergens, and chemicals released from new carpeting, furniture, and air fresheners. Some people are more sensitive to irritants than others.

Persons most likely to be affected by these irritants include the elderly, children, and people with asthma, allergies, lung disease, and heart problems.

## What else should I do if I may be having health problems from imported drywall?

- See or call a doctor if you are experiencing health problems and say that you are concerned your illness might be related to imported drywall. Tell your doctor about CDC/ATSDR's [health care provider fact sheet](#) for imported drywall. This fact sheet tells your health care provider how to get more information.
- Go outdoors to get fresh air. Scientists do not know what, if any, benefit there is to opening windows to allow fresh air to come into the home.
- File a report with CPSC at (800) 638-2772 or on-line at <https://www.saferproducts.gov/CPSRMSPublic/Incidents/ReportIncident.aspx>

## Are there other problems I should watch for in my home that may be related to imported drywall?

Some homes with imported drywall have had damage to exposed wiring. We do not know of any house fires that have occurred related to the drywall. If you experience unusual electrical problems in your home (such as appliances or light switches not working), ask a licensed electrician to check out the problem.

## Where can I get additional information?

For up to date information you can contact the CPSC at 1-800-638-2772 or visit their on-line drywall information center at <http://www.cpsc.gov/info/drywall/index.html>.