

A/C Copper Coil Corrosion Linked to Chinese Drywall

The correlation between Chinese drywall and corroded copper a/c coils is a scientific conundrum the federal government and many homeowners are endeavoring to solve. After several complaints filed and corroded copper coils replaced, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) took over the investigation from local health departments whose preliminary findings showed a correlation, but due to mitigating factors were unable to establish undeniable links. In light of these events, the CPSC conducted three investigations of the problem drywall, including, a 51-home indoor air study; an electrical component corrosion study, and a fire safety component corrosion study. The studies determined there is a strong correlation between these complaints and the presence of some Chinese drywall.

"The 51-home report finds a strong association between the problem drywall, the hydrogen sulfide levels in homes with that

■ See **CHINESE DRYWALL** page 5

CHINESE DRYWALL

continued from page 1

drywall, and corrosion in those homes," said a CPSC executive summary to the preliminary findings of the three studies. "The two preliminary component corrosion studies support this finding."

With this correlation determined and backed by science, the next step is for the CPSC's Interagency Task Force to begin a new phase by developing a protocol to identify homes with corrosive drywall and by creating a process to address the corrosive drywall and its effects.

"We now have the science that enables the CPSC's Interagency Task Force to move ahead to the next phase — to develop both a screening process and effective remediation methods," said Inez Tenenbaum, chairman of the CPSC. "Ongoing studies will examine health and safety effects, but we are now ready to get to work fixing this problem."

Imported from China, the foreign drywall supply was necessary during the rebuilding efforts after Hurricanes Katrina and

Rita. As of Nov. 20, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) had received 2,091 incident reports related to drywall from 31 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. More than 90 percent of the reports continue to come from Florida, Louisiana, and Virginia. These ranged from health complaints to the replacement of multiple a/c coils and components along with other copper elements within the structure.

"While the CPSC has aggressively pursued a detailed investigation into the Chinese drywall supply chain, it remains difficult to estimate the total number of homes that could contain problem drywall," explained the report. "We are working with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to monitor imports of possible Chinese drywall. We believe no new Chinese drywall has entered the United States in 2009."

In the meantime, homeowners who believe they may have problem drywall have been advised to immediately report it to the CPSC. ■

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