

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

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OFFICE OF SUPERFUND REMEDIATION AND TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION  
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
CONSUMER PROTECTION, PRODUCT SAFETY, AND INSURANCE  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
May 21, 2009**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Elizabeth Southerland. I am the Acting Deputy Director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Office of Superfund Remediation and Technology Innovation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on EPA's role in federal agency efforts to address issues associated with suspect Chinese drywall.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is the lead federal agency regarding the issue of suspect Chinese drywall. EPA is now working with CPSC, the Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the Florida Department of Health, and other state and federal agencies to help determine what health and environmental risks, if any, may be posed by suspect Chinese drywall.

At the request of ATSDR, EPA's Environmental Response Team (ERT) in Edison, New Jersey is assisting federal efforts by undertaking analysis of the chemical composition of samples of suspect Chinese drywall. ERT analyzed two samples of Chinese drywall product from Florida homes provided by ATSDR and four drywall product samples manufactured in the United States.

EPA completed its initial content analysis of the drywall samples including the two samples of suspect Chinese drywall taken from Florida homes and further analysis is expected. It is important to note that the analysis included a very small sample size, and the results of this testing may not be representative of all drywall products.

Beyond this initial analysis, EPA is chairing a federal and state technical group to develop protocols for home indoor air sampling to characterize the gaseous emissions that may be causing indoor air problems under varying temperature and humidity. This effort consists of two phases. During Phase I, EPA may analyze other drywall samples, conduct literature searches, identify chemical(s) and sulfur gases of potential concern that may be responsible for observed odors, and develop/modify analytical methods for air monitoring.

During Phase II, three houses in Florida and three houses in Louisiana will be selected to field test the validity of the draft protocol in consultation with CPSC, CDC, and the respective states. This activity will also help refine the list of suspected causative agents. Phase II is expected to begin during the first week of June.

CPSC is currently designing a series of chamber tests to evaluate “off-gases” derived when drywall samples from a variety of U.S. and Chinese manufacturers are exposed to varying temperature and humidity. The results obtained from EPA Phase I and II activities will be used to prepare a protocol for CPSC and states to use when conducting indoor air sampling of homes in Florida, Louisiana and other states throughout the nation. EPA expects a joint federal-state agreed upon air monitoring protocol to be completed by the end of June 2009.

Once the joint federal-state agreed upon air monitoring protocol is established, CPSC may utilize a contractor to conduct large scale home testing in accordance with this protocol. CDC/ATSDR is providing recommendations to EPA and CPSC to ensure that results can be interpreted for public health purposes.

EPA will continue to support federal and state efforts to evaluate suspect Chinese drywall and help our federal, state, and local partners determine what actions will be necessary to ensure protection of human health and the environment. Thank you again for inviting me to testify here today, and I look forward to answering any questions that you might have.