



January 29, 2010

Feds set first criteria for defective drywall diagnosis

Say it was installed in U.S. homes from 2001-2008

By *MARY WOZNIAK*
mwozniak@news-press.com

Federal agencies Thursday came out with a new set of criteria to help homeowners and home inspectors determine whether a home definitively has defective drywall.

Calling it a "preliminary" protocol, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Housing and Urban Development Department outlined standards for homes built from 2001-08, for the first time acknowledging a wider range of possible homes may be affected than the earlier estimates of 2004-07.

The reason is that the safety commission has received reports of homes built as far back as 2001 with the drywall and the imports of defective drywall to the United States didn't dry up until 2008, said Warren Friedman, senior adviser to the Office of Healthy Homes at HUD.

The federal criteria is more precise than the state Department of Health criteria issued almost a year ago. In this case, some homeowners may have to prove certain levels of chemical compounds like strontium, elemental sulfur and others are in their homes in order to qualify for the tainted list.

Homeowners would not have to repeat testing they have already done, but this means in some cases additional testing may be needed, Friedman said.

However, it doesn't help homeowners with whom to hire to do the testing.

"We recognize that important additional guidance is still needed to clarify qualifications for inspectors and test laboratories and to describe methods for making the measurements in the criteria," the document says.

The release of the new protocol comes just two days before a Saturday town hall meeting on defective drywall is held in Fort Myers, called by Sen. George LeMieux, R-Florida.

LeMieux said Thursday that, now that a federal protocol has been outlined, he will contact the secretary of HUD to press for federal funds to be made available to drywall victims.

LeMieux stopped short of saying he would ask for emergency funds, but called the drywall problem "an emergency situation" akin to a natural disaster.

Homeowners could not foresee the problem and it's beyond the ability of people to handle it, LeMieux said.

"This is about as destructive to a family as you can get."

Additional Facts

IF YOU GO

- What: Town hall meeting on defective drywall, called by Sen. George LeMieux, R-Florida.

- When: 10 a.m. to noon Saturday

- Where: Lee County Commission chambers in the county courthouse, 2120 Main St., Fort Myers.

-Speakers: Representatives of LeMieux; the safety commission; HUD; the state Office of Insurance Regulation; the Lee County property appraiser; and David Krause, toxicologist for the state Health Department.

- For full agenda and letter sent by Sen. LeMieux Thursday to the CPSC, see news-press.com
