

Citizen Information about Chinese Drywall

What should I do if I think I have Chinese drywall in my home?

If you suspect that you have Chinese drywall in your home, it is recommended that you first contact your home's builder. Individuals may also call the Consumer Product Safety Commission's toll-free consumer hotline at 1-800-638-2772 or the Virginia Department of Health at (804) 864-8182 for more information about Chinese drywall.

The Virginia Department of Health continues to monitor the evolving Chinese drywall issue and any potential impacts on public health. New information will be posted to the Virginia Department of Health Web site, www.vdh.virginia.gov, as it becomes available.

Another good source of information is the US Consumer Product Safety Commission web site: <http://www.cpsc.gov/info/drywall/drywallstatus07092009.pdf> 

How do I know if I have Chinese drywall in my home?

The Division of Code Compliance has been investigating potential problematic drywall now for several months. Gypsum drywall that does not comply with the code approved testing agencies noted in the Uniform Statewide Building Code is prohibited in Virginia. It has been determined that some Chinese drywall products do meet these standards. Since a drywall inspection is not a required inspection, the faulty products have been used unnoticed in several U.S. States. James City County Code Compliance has confirmed that some homes in James City County have Chinese drywall. This has been confirmed by asking the owners to remove a sufficient amount of drywall to locate "Made in China" on the back or unfinished side. While other symptoms such as tarnished metal may be present, only witnessing the "Made in China" listing will absolutely confirm the presence of Chinese drywall. If it is determined that there is a faulty product present, and the Certificate of Occupancy has been issued within two years, the State of Virginia gives the local jurisdiction authority to send a Notice of Violation to the contractor for remedial work.

How can I have my drywall tested?

James City County cannot recommend a specific agency to test for appropriate products used in the construction of a home or the associated environmental concerns. However, a homeowner can find several good environmental agencies online. There is a highly specialized tool that can determine the chemical composition of drywall. This tool is expensive and rare. There are very few of them in the Tidewater Virginia area. Before you hire someone to do testing on your drywall, make sure you know what tool they are going to use, how it works, and what method would be used to conduct their tests. Also, if a section of gypsum wallboard can be exposed, arrangements can be made for a James City County inspector to come to your residence to investigate. It is always important for homeowners to contact their contractors and discuss all of their concerns in detail.

What's happening at the state level about Chinese drywall?

There is currently a house bill regarding Chinese drywall being considered by the Virginia legislature which would provide assistance to homeowners adversely affected by Chinese drywall. Also, there have been several documents produced that would be of interest for citizens concerned about the possible presence of defective drywall in their home. The following links provide useful information:

Frequently asked Questions about Drywall Imported from China, from the Virginia Department of Health prepared by Dwight D. Flammia, Ph.D.
<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/DEE/PublicHealthToxicology/documents/pdf/chinese%20drywall%20FAQ%20final.pdf>

Chinese Drywall; Facts and Fears, prepared by Asset Advisors and Managers, Inc. for Martin County, Florida.
http://www.assetadvisorsandmanagers.com/uploads/Presentation_Martin_Realtors_10_09_2009.pdf

What can James City County do if I need additional help?

If a James City County resident does not feel that they have received an appropriate response from their home builder, they may contact the James City County Code Compliance Division at (757) 253-6620 to discuss their concerns. Homeowners are also encouraged to contact Virginia Senators Jim Webb (www.webb.senate.gov), John Warner (www.warner.senate.gov) and Congressman Rob Wittman (<http://www.wittman.house.gov/>).

[Response Letter from Senator Warner's Office](#)

A James City County resident who suspects they may have Chinese sheet rock (CSR) in their home should consider taking the following actions:

1. Notify the builder in writing and keep a copy of the letter.
2. Keep a copy of any documents related to CSR generated by the builder and provided to the homeowner. There is a highly specialized tool which can be used to determine if the sheetrock is American made or CSR. Some builders have rented this tool, examined houses in question, and documented their findings. Code Compliance does not have one of these tools.
3. Notify James City County Code Compliance in writing. Letters should be addressed to Douglas H. Murrow, Director of Code Compliance, James City County, PO Box 8784, Williamsburg, VA 23187.
4. Look for areas of the house where it is possible to non-destructively examine the back or unfinished side of the sheetrock. Look for the words "Made In China". Such areas may include knee wall spaces, utility closets, and attics. (While symptoms such as tarnished metal are important indicators, they do not absolutely confirm the presence of CSR the way the words Made in China do.) Keep in mind that some houses apparently have some American made sheetrock and some CSR.

5. If there are no locations in the house that offer non-destructive areas for examination, then the homeowner may want to consider removing small areas of finished sheetrock, EG 12 inches by 12 inches, in an effort to find the words “Made In China”.
6. If the words “Made in China” are located on a piece of the sheetrock, call Code Compliance, 253-6684, and ask that an inspector come by to confirm.
7. Once determined by a Code Compliance inspection that a non-code compliant drywall product has been installed in their home, and the home is less than two years old, the Code Compliance Division will contact the home builder requiring corrective action. Section 115.2.1 of the Uniform Statewide Building Code states.....*When violations are discovered more than two years after the certificate of occupancy is issued or the date of initial occupancy, whichever occurred later, or more than two years after the approved final inspection for an alteration or renovation, a notice of violation shall only be issued upon advice from the legal counsel of the locality that action may be taken to compel correction of the violation.* The James City County Attorney’s office has determined that the issue is beyond the statute of limitation for prosecutions under the Uniform Statewide Building Code. Consequently, the County cannot legally initiate a case under the USBC and no Notice of Violation should be issued. Also, if the home is more than 2 years old, the homeowner can still seek the cooperation of the builder in replacing the CSR either on a voluntary basis or by taking civil legal action.
8. Homeowners who choose to move ahead with replacement of CSR either on their own or with the help of their builder should document carefully replacement activities and costs. One way to help do this is to obtain a James City County Building Permit and inspections.