



**Testimony before the
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection,
Product Safety, and Insurance
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
United States Senate**

**Health and Product Safety Issues Associated
with Imported Drywall**

Statement of

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Good morning Chairman Pryor, Senator Wicker, Senator Nelson, and other distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I am Dr. Michael McGeehin, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects within the National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (CDC/ATSDR) recognizes the serious concerns that residents of Florida, Louisiana, and other affected states have regarding certain drywall manufactured in China and imported to the United States that has been used in construction and renovation of homes. My testimony today will focus on three aspects of CDC's ongoing support of the response to emerging concerns regarding this issue:

- CDC's role in the coordinated federal response to Chinese manufactured drywall
- CDC's approach to understanding the possible human health effects of exposure to potential environmental hazards
- CDC's development of recommended public health action

CDC's Role in the Coordinated Federal Response to Chinese Manufactured Drywall

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (CDC/ATSDR) is providing public health expertise in support of

the Consumer Product Safety Commission's (CPSC's) leadership of the federal response to concerns regarding Chinese manufactured drywall. As part of this response, CDC/ATSDR is collaborating with the CPSC, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Florida Department of Health (FLDOH), the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, and others to determine any possible health implications from living in a home where drywall imported from China exists and, most importantly, to be able to provide information for residents who may be adversely affected by these exposures.

Critical to the response will be continued cooperation among involved agencies and use of existing resources to develop and implement the appropriate response strategy. CDC/ATSDR participated in a meeting on April 14, 2009, with CPSC, EPA, and other agencies to define appropriate roles for each agency and to define the next steps to drive the health and safety response.

CDC/ATSDR has utilized its extensive network of contacts with state health and environmental agencies during weekly conference calls among the involved federal and state agencies to help ensure that current and accurate information and approaches are rapidly shared, and to assist with coordination among the involved agencies and groups. In addition, CDC/ATSDR is providing technical input to the EPA and CPSC indoor and outdoor air sampling plans to ensure results can be interpreted for public health purposes.

CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is also providing industrial hygiene expertise to the coordinated federal response. NIOSH is preparing to conduct a health hazard evaluation and working with the Florida

Department of Health and a home builder, to evaluate potential health hazards and make any needed recommendations to protect persons involved in drywall removal.

Shortly after receiving a January 2009 request for assistance from the State of Florida, CDC/ATSDR established regular communication with the Florida Department of Health. We continue to expand our technical assistance to include other state health departments. For example, we are working with the states to create fact sheets for the public about imported drywall. We are also developing a fact sheet for health care providers who may be evaluating patients living in homes with Chinese manufactured drywall. The Florida Department of Health, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, and other state health departments and poison control centers will distribute the educational material. It will also be available on the CDC/ATSDR website.

CDC's Approach to Understanding the Possible Human Health Effects of Exposure to Potential Environmental Hazards

The first step in assessing a possible link between an environmental contaminant and health outcomes is to determine the nature of the exposure accurately. The air and material sampling that CPSC and EPA are conducting is critical in moving us towards a better understanding of who is exposed to what contaminants and at what levels. Once we know the exposure, we will be able to more accurately evaluate the strength of possible links to human health. We will be meeting next week with Florida Department of Health staff to discuss further the

options for addressing the health concerns associated with Chinese manufactured drywall.

Determination of Recommended Public Health Action

CDC will collaborate with the other federal agencies and with the states in driving a rapid, coordinated, appropriate, and effective public health response. We are likely to continue to be involved with a range of activities, including defining the type and extent of the hazard, educating the public and various health and environmental professionals about the potential hazard and how to avoid it, and working with partners (including regulatory agencies) to develop appropriate policy responses.

If we determine that there are health threatening exposures in homes, we will work with all the agencies to recommend the appropriate response strategy. Actions now underway to define the type and extent of the exposure are an essential first step.

Conclusion

In conclusion, CDC/ATSDR recognizes the urgency of this issue and is committed to working with Florida, Louisiana, and other affected states. Furthermore, we will continue to contribute to the overall Federal response consistent with our expertise and mandate.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this information to you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.