

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2010

The Honorable Kelvin Cochran
U.S. Fire Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
United States Fire Administration
16825 S. Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

Dear Administrator Cochran:

We are writing to request your assistance in investigating the potential fire hazard and safety impacts of corrosive Chinese-made drywall, which is prevalent in our states. As you are aware, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are continually conducting investigations into the health and safety impacts of Chinese-made drywall. We believe that the Federal Emergency Management Agency's United States Fire Administration (USFA) has an important role in this investigation, as the corrosive drywall may pose a significant fire risk to affected homeowners.

Since 2006, more than 550 million pounds of drywall have been imported to the United States from China. Countless homeowners across the country have reported serious metal corrosion, noxious fumes, and health concerns. As of February 17, 2010, the CPSC had received 2,941 incident reports related to drywall from 37 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. While a majority of these reports are from homeowners in Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Virginia, these figures demonstrate that defective drywall poses a threat to homeowners across the country.

While further testing is underway, recently announced Federal studies have preliminary findings of "substantial corrosion of copper wiring" in homes. This corrosion is troubling as smoke and fire alarms will cease to function if the corrosion continues to eat away at their wiring. In the State of Louisiana, the State Fire Chief and the St. Bernard Parish Fire Chief have already reviewed reports of corrosion on copper wiring. These officials have gone on record that corrosive Chinese drywall in a home presents a significant fire risk. This is because if the corrosion gets worse, it could cause electrical arcing and could result in a fire. Just this month, the CPSC also posted an "Alert for Fire Safety Professionals." This alert, however, is not comprehensive; merely directs fire safety officials to report suspicious fires to CPSC; and includes no information for homeowners.

As Senators representing states whose homeowners have been impacted by the contaminated drywall issue, we are writing to you to ask for your assistance with not only investigating, but also making the public aware of the potential fire hazards associated with affected drywall. We believe that the U.S. Fire Administration has an important role to play in making homeowners aware of the fire risk in their homes. As CPSC is investigating reports of fire incidents related to drywall, we would also respectfully request that the USFA take the following actions:

- **Public Information:** Work with CPSC to post a public announcement similar to CPSC's recall and product safety announcements, listing safety measures which homeowners may take to prevent a fire. CPSC and the Department of Housing and Urban Development issued Interim Guidance on the identification of homes with corrosion and problem drywall on January 28, 2010, and we believe that guidance from the USFA on potential fire hazards is one of the next important steps needed to protect affected homeowners. Also review the recent CPSC alert for fire safety professionals in the event that USFA can improve this document.
- **Scientific Analysis:** The CPSC, in coordination with other Federal agencies, is currently reviewing the health risks posed by Chinese drywall. We encourage USFA's scientists to coordinate with these agencies to identify the fire hazard risks posed by this potentially hazardous product.

Homeowners in our states are already struggling to deal with the health and property issues related to the defective drywall. We believe that these impacted homeowners should not be subjected to further dangers of fire due to defective drywall. As other states and localities begin investigating similar concerns, we believe that your agency can play a critical role in the ongoing Federal investigation of Chinese drywall.

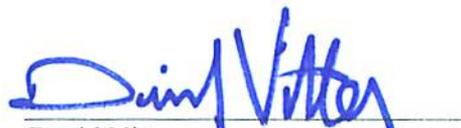
Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

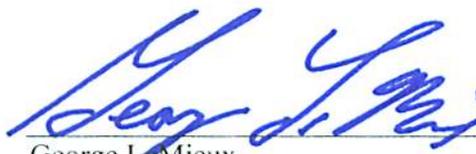

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United States Senator


Thad Cochran
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George LeMieux
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Inez Tenenbaum, Chairman, Consumer Product Safety Commission