

# Chinese Drywall

## Are You at Risk?

by Andrew Weinstein of the Weinstein Law Firm



As a long-time member of the Coral Springs and Parkland communities, I have devoted my legal practice to helping those injured due to the negligence of others. Recently, I have been particularly concerned with the Chinese drywall crisis that many of my friends and neighbors have had to deal with. The defective drywall is believed to cause sulfur-based gas odors in the home, corrosion of wiring and pipes, and ruined jewelry and appliances. Many residents of homes built with the defective drywall have also suffered with respiratory ailments and other health problems. The Chinese drywall problem has sparked numerous complaints and town hall meetings to answer homeowners' questions and concerns on the topic. These informative meetings have allowed the public to vent their frustrations and find out whether they have Chinese drywall in their homes, how to look for it, and what action steps they need to take.

In a recent letter, Governor Charlie Crist formally asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Centers for Disease Protection and Control (CDC) for their assistance after the Florida Department of Health concluded that the chemicals emitted from the corrosive drywall could be a health hazard if present at excessive concentrations. His request was for more testing which would help uncover the hazardous health implications of the drywall. Many impacted by this crisis hope for government assistance, as they have been forced to move out of their homes while still remaining responsible for mortgage and maintenance payments.

Florida's Attorney General's office has launched a criminal investigation into whether the two companies believed to be at the center of the Chinese drywall controversy-Knauf Plasterboard Tianjin Co. Ltd. of China and L&W Supply Corp.- committed any deceptive sales or marketing practices. Many lawsuits have been brought, some seeking class-action status, to hold the manufacturers, contractors, suppliers, builders and installers liable for the defective drywall. The lawsuits argue that the Chinese drywall is emitting sulfur, methane and other harmful chemical gases that are

destroying plaintiffs' homes and affecting their health. Health officials are highly concerned that the fumes could be especially dangerous to the very young, the elderly, those with asthma and chemical sensitivity.

### Listed below are some indicators that you may have defective drywall in your home:

- Unpleasant odor, sulfur-based gas smell, rotten egg smell in home
- Electrical problems, lights blinking on and off
- Constant replacement of A/C systems or components
- Corroding of air conditioner coils, computer wiring, and metal picture frames
- Silver jewelry or flatware tarnishing and unable to be polished
- Discoloration of wood furniture
- Occupants of the home experiencing severe allergy attacks, eye irritations, headaches, upper respiratory problems, nose bleeds, dizzy spells and insomnia.

If you feel that your home and/or health have been affected by Chinese drywall you may have a case and be able to recover damages. These damages can include the costs to remove and replace the defective drywall as well as the cost to replace any property that was damaged by the gases emitted by the defective drywall. Other damages can include health and respiratory problems incurred by the gases emitted from the defective drywall. If you have any questions about this topic, please feel free to contact me.

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