



At least a half-dozen homebuilders, installers and environmental consultants knew as early as 2006 that foul smells were coming from drywall imported from China – but they didn’t share their early concerns with the public, even when homeowners began complaining about the drywall in 2008.

ProPublica and the Sarasota Herald-Tribune reported last month that two U.S. companies – WCI Communities, a major Florida homebuilder, and Banner Supply, a Miami-based distributor – knew about the problem in 2006. But according to recently released sworn depositions by current and former executives at Banner, other companies also were aware of the problem.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has since linked the foul odor to sulfur gases that can corrode electrical wiring and household appliances, including air conditioners and refrigerators. The long-term health effects of the air are still being studied, although homeowners have complained of respiratory problems, bloody noses and severe headaches.

As WCI was ripping the smelly drywall out of homes on Florida’s east coast, the company was selling houses built with the same material on the west coast. Several homeowners in the Sun City Center and the Venetian Golf and River Club in North Venice told ProPublica and the Herald-Tribune that they bought homes from WCI as late as March 2007 — eight months after the builder had found problems with Chinese drywall — but received no warning.

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