

US Plywood Producers Claim Certifiers Giving Imports a Pass

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Ten domestic plywood producers have banded together as the “U.S. Structural Plywood Integrity Coalition” to file a Lanham Act claim of false labeling against three U.S. certification agencies: PFS TECO, Timber Products Inspection, and International Accreditation Service.

The group claims that structural plywood panels produced in South America are being fraudulently certified and stamped as compliant with U.S. Product Standard PS1-09 for Structural Plywood, when the panels allegedly do not meet the country’s minimum structural requirements for stiffness and de-flection.

The testing agencies are standing by their certifications of the products.

Contending otherwise are Coastal Plywood Co., Freres Lumber, Hardel Mutual Plywood Corp., Hunt Forest Products, Murphy Co., Scotch Plywood Co., SDS Lumber, Southern Veneer Products, Southern Veneer Specialty Products, and Swanson Group.

They say Brazilian structural plywood panels have flooded America’s domestic market over the last few years due to the strong U.S. dollar, lax environmental standards in the countries of origination, and a concerted effort by the Brazilian government to encourage wanton harvest. In the last two years, the imports allegedly have taken over about 25% of the U.S. market.

The U.S. producers charge that “a large portion of the volume of panels are manufactured using wood species harvested from large-scale plantations that were once rainforests. These plantations were planted in loblolly pine, slash pine, and other North American species that are used in manufacturing across the Southern U.S. However, when these species are planted in regions they have never naturally grown, the tree’s fiber no longer behaves like those grown in their natural regions. The temperate climate and full-year growing season in Brazil lead to fiber that has very little stiffness or strength when used in plywood.”

Last year, U.S. wood products distributors were notified by APA Product Advisory SP-1185, which showed that imported panels from seven Brazilian panel manufacturers failed in panel bending stiffness by a margin of 23% to 55%. Recent testing reportedly showed little change in the panels’ performance.

“The product standards for American plywood have serious real-world implications for all homes constructed using wood panel products,” said Tyler Freres, VP of sales for Freres Lumber, Lyons, Or. “Inferior products can endanger the health and safety of everyone who depends upon their homes to provide shelter and security for their families and loved ones. It is incumbent upon engineered wood products manufacturers to ensure that we meet all codes and that U.S. certification agencies have consumers’ health and safety as their primary concern when providing their certifications.”