

OPINION

Beware of falsely labeled Brazilian wood panels that fail quality, performance standards

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Oct 25, 2019

It is clear to U.S. panel manufacturers that there was a concerted effort to defraud American consumers by misrepresenting imported panels as equivalent to domestic panels.

Freres Lumber Co. has joined nine other U.S. plywood producers 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 essential element of the claim is that structural plywood panels produced in Brazil are being fraudulently certified and stamped as compliant with U.S. Product Standard PS1-09 for Structural Plywood when the panels actually do not meet the standard’s minimum structural requirements for stiffness and deflection.



Plywood manufacturing at a Freres Lumber Company facility.

(PHOTO: COURTESY OF SHANNA HALL)

The flood of inferior South American wood products is a serious problem for builders and the public who rely on quality construction materials. It is also detrimental to domestic producers who comply with stringent quality and performance standards while imported panels avoid compliance.



Logging roads wind through sections of clear-cut and timber in the Mount Hood National Forest, 40 miles east of Portland, Ore.

(PHOTO: AP)

Beyond the imported inferior wood products, a much bigger societal issue exists. Throughout the past 20 years in the Pacific Northwest, our forest products industry has constantly been under environmental litigation and has experienced a dramatic reduction in timber supply, particularly on federal land. The federal government owns 60 percent of Oregon forestland and used to provide almost 85 percent of the total harvest in Oregon.

Timber harvest was the lifeblood of our rural communities as the federal government pays no property taxes to counties in which they reside; rather, the counties received a percentage of the harvest revenues to fund community services and schools.

After 20 years of a federal harvest program that is reduced to 10 percent of what it once was, our forests are overcrowded and need to be managed. In fact, according to the annual Forest Inventory Analysis conducted by the USFS, mortality has exceeded harvest on Federal lands for the last 20 years and in the last assessment, mortality exceeds regrowth.

A “Not in My Backyard” mentality, and constant pressure from a well-intentioned but misdirected environmental community has created a tinderbox in our forests. Will it truly take an Oregon equivalent of a Paradise fire, where 86 people died and an entire town was decimated, for us to manage the lands and forests within the Oregon borders?

Timber harvest reduction in the Northwest not only provides the opportunity, but it encourages the importation of wood products from all over the world.

In the global picture, wood is an important resource to carefully manage. Trustworthy certification for building products is an important part of the equation.

Managing the forest so that it isn't a tinderbox is another crucial element. Wood is the only truly renewable and recyclable building material available to us as a society.

As members of the timber industry and responsible stewards of our forests, we are obligated to hold our certification agencies accountable.

Tyler Freres is the vice president of sales for Freres Lumber Co., Inc. He has worked in plywood manufacturing since 2004 and is responsible for selling and sourcing all veneer for Freres veneer and plywood operations. As an executive team member, he takes an active role in determining the long-term direction of the company. You may reach him at tyfreres@frereslumber.com



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(PHOTO: COURTESY OF SHANNA HALL)
