

Palm Beach County drywall cases to move forward

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Updated: 7:23 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2010
Posted: 6:13 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2010

Palm Beach County homeowners affected by tainted drywall are one step closer to making their case on their home turf.

In an order Wednesday, Palm Beach County Circuit Judge Glenn Kelley ruled that defective drywall cases consolidated in Palm Beach County can move forward without waiting on drywall cases in federal court.

Some defendants in cases filed in Palm Beach County - including builder Centerline Homes and drywall distributor Banner Supply - had asked that the cases be stayed.

"It's really a huge win, because now ... we're able to begin going forward on Chinese drywall cases in Palm Beach County," said David Durkee, plaintiffs liaison council for the consolidated cases. "Now we can resolve the cases or have our day in court."

More than 70 defective drywall cases - some for Chinese-made drywall, and some alleging similar problems with American wallboard - are pending in Palm Beach County Circuit Court.

Barbara Tutin, who lives in the Vizcaya development west of Delray Beach, is one of the plaintiffs in those cases.

"I'm just very, very excited about this ruling," Tutin said. "I'm hoping there's an end to this coming soon, that we'll be able to go to trial soon and get my house fixed."

Tutin, who is still living in a house that she says was built with defective wallboard, says she constantly worries about her health and about when her appliances and air conditioner might fail again.

"The only thing keeping me going is that a resolution will come soon," she said.

Some drywall installed between 2000 and 2008 has been found to give off sulfuric gases linked to metal corrosion in homes and blamed for health problems.

No trial date has been set, but Durkee has said he hopes to go to trial late this year or early next year.

The next status conference on the consolidated drywall cases is planned for Aug. 27.

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