

Feb. 4, 2009

# Feds order sales halt of RetroFoam insulation

About 700 homeowners may have had the product installed

By **RANDY RICHMOND AND CHRISTINA SPENCER, SUN MEDIA**

The federal government has raised the spectre of another health scare over home insulation, this one centred on Southwestern Ontario.

Justice Minister Rob Nicholson yesterday announced a "cease-and desist" order against home insulator **RetroFoam Canada**, based in Breslau near Waterloo, and its area dealers.

"It's come to our attention that part of the insulation contained urea formaldehyde," Nicholson said.

Urea formaldehyde foam insulation (UFFI) was banned in Canada in 1980 because it was thought to be a potential health threat.

The federal government figures RetroFoam has been installed in about 700 homes.

Enerliv, the Canadian distributor of the insulation, has been ordered to "to stop all sale, advertisement and further installations of the product and to call back any unused product."

Paul Weigel of Breslau, who owns the rights to distribute RetroFoam in Canada, didn't respond to an interview request.

But a RetroFoam Canada statement e-mailed from Breslau to Sun Media yesterday said the federal government is overreacting.

"The product is safe," the release said. "The insulation is stable and does not degenerate or lose its performance."

The RetroFoam Canada website said the company has dealers in Camlachie Windsor, Peterborough and Toronto.

Mount Forest dealer Shawn La Chanse said the ban has stunned homeowners looking to cut energy costs and contractors looking to make a living during the recession.

"It's killing me," he said. "It's a great product. Our customers are calling us all the time and we are getting rave reviews."

La Chasse said the product received initial approval by the federally- operated Canadian Construction Materials Centre.

Another federal agency, Ecoenergy, gave his customers grants to retrofit their homes with RetroFoam, he added, saying he had installed the foam in 26 houses.

Natural Resources Canada didn't respond to a query about whether any funds had gone to RetroFoam to help clients install the insulation now under ban.

Liberal natural resources critic Geoff Regan suggested the government had acted too slowly.

"It seems to me you've got a case here where they need to inform the public about the situation and should have done so already -- before 700 homes were affected."

"That's unbelievable."

"The balance of evidence said that it's likely to be an irritant or a hazard for a certain number of people and therefore should be removed," said Prof. Robert Burk, who chairs the chemistry department at Carleton University in Ottawa.

"I'm stunned that any company would still be using UFFI," said Aaron Freeman of Environmental Defence. ". . . this insulation is toxic."

Health Canada promised yesterday to contact homeowners about having their air quality tested.

The government continues to investigate the company and will set up a 1-800 number for homeowners worried about the insulation, Nicholson said.

---

## INSULATION SCARES

In 1980 Canada banned use of urea formaldehyde foam insulation, or UFFI, which had been widely used.

It was feared the foam released formaldehyde, which could cause respiratory problems and even cancer.

About 280,000 Canadian homes had UFFI installed.

The federal government yesterday (Feb. 3, 2009) banned another product, **RetroFoam**, saying it also contains urea formaldehyde.

[canoe network... cnews](#)

\*\*\*