
chapter 5. HARDBOARD SIDING

KECK, MAHIN & CATE

A PARTNERSHIP INCLUDING PROFESSIONAL CORPORATIONS

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March 9, 1990

FILE NUMBER 00707-001
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KECK MAHIN CATE & KOETHER
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
FAR HILLS, NEW JERSEY

By Telecopier

Mr. William Dost, Head
Wood Building Research Center
Forest Products Laboratory
University of California at Berkeley
1301 S. 46th Street
Richmond, CA 94804

Dear Mr. Dost:

I represent the American Hardboard Association, ("AHA") which is the national trade association of manufacturers of hardboard and hardboard products, including siding.

AHA has forwarded to me a copy of your current draft of chapter five of a publication entitled Wood Building Design Manual, co-authored with Elmer Botsai, and which, reportedly, is to be published under the auspices of the University of California. I have been informed that you have set an informal deadline of Friday, March 9 for the submission of comments by AHA on your draft.

AHA staff and member company representatives have conducted an initial review of the proposed chapter. I am in complete agreement with their assessment that the draft is shot full of inaccurate and unsupported statements about hardboard siding. It rests its damaging conclusions on many false claims, inaccurate definitions and unsupported opinions. Problems caused by other building components are described in detail and then wrongly attributed to hardboard.

Publication of this chapter in its current form will inflict immediate, irreparable financial damage on AHA member companies doing business in California and nationwide. It would defame a product that has been successfully used on over 12 million houses over the past twenty-five years, with little consumer complaint. Because of this potential for great and lasting harm to the U.S. hardboard industry, we must inform you that if the publication remains unchanged we will take all necessary and proper legal

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measures for the protection of the hardboard industry. These steps may involve not only you, but also your co-author, publisher and the University of California.

To avoid these negative consequences, it is requested that publication of your article be delayed until AHA and its member companies have had a full opportunity to review not only the chapter in detail, but also the supporting data upon which it is based. We also request that an extensive peer review of this chapter be undertaken with input from the hardboard industry.

Louis Wagner, AHA's Technical Director, is currently preparing a detailed analysis of your article in conjunction with technical experts employed both within and outside the hardboard industry. This analysis will be forwarded to you by Friday, March 16. By this letter, we are also requesting a subsequent meeting with you to discuss your article so that we can have a full and frank exchange of views and information concerning it. Please contact Mr. Wagner at the AHA offices (708 934-8800) to arrange for such a meeting.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and would welcome a decision to delay publication until AHA's analysis can be submitted and its evidence given full consideration by you and your co-author.

Sincerely yours,



Robin W. Grover

RWG/rlm
 BRL/rlm

cc: David Pierpoint Gardner, PhD
 Wilfrid R. Gardner, PhD
 Frank Beale, PhD
 Elmer Botsai, PhD
 William C. Ives, Esq.

After careful consideration, the authors feel they must withdraw this proposed chapter from this book in spite of making honest efforts to resolve our differences with the American Hardboard Association. We simply do not have the fiscal resources to wage a legal battle with the American Hardboard Association. The necessary monies for legal counsel simply through the interrogatory and deposition phase, let alone

the need for experts and trial costs, are beyond our means.

Accordingly, we will let Mr. Grover's letter speak for us with the following simple opinion. — "The authors believe that hardboard siding is not the best choice for exterior cladding when it is exposed to rain or irrigation water."