

Spray Foam Insulation & Pest Management

The Georgia Structural Pest Control Commission (SPCC) serves the public by adopting regulations and policy to protect the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Georgia. As part of their mission, the SPCC works with GDA to educate the public about structural pest management. This document was created to provide a background on spray foam insulation and issues related to pest management.

Reference – Polyurethane Spray Foam Insulation (PSFI)

The following is important information for Georgia consumers related to ***Polyurethane Spray Foam Insulation***.

The Georgia Department of Agriculture ***does not*** regulate Polyurethane Spray Foam Applicators, but is responsible for regulating the Pest Management industry in Georgia. The Pest Management industry has noticed an increase in PSFI installations in the State of Georgia during routine inspections for wood destroying organisms and have brought this to the attention of the SPCC. This publication is an effort to inform consumers how PSFI products may adversely impact the ability to inspect for and control termites, carpenter ants, wood boring beetles, and other pests including rats and mice.

If you are considering the installation of PSFI or have already installed this product, we urge you to read the information below to understand the issues surrounding the unintended consequences associated with trying to make your home more energy efficient. The Georgia Department of Agriculture recommends that you contact your local county extension office and several Pest Management Professionals to fully understand how these products could affect your home's protection from pests. It is also very important to know if a polystyrene spray foam installation will impact your existing termite warranty.

Background:

Polyurethane spray foam insulation is an alternative to traditional building insulation such as fiberglass. It is a two-component mixture composed of isocyanate and polyol resin which comes together at the tip of application tool to form an expanding foam. The foam can be sprayed on to/into/under any number of construction features to provide insulation for a building.

Advantages/Disadvantages

There are reported advantages and disadvantages of PSFI insulation by the industry. Advantages include energy cost savings and disadvantages include higher installation cost and hidden water leaks. The SPCC also notes that PSFI prevents comprehensive performance of inspections for wood destroying organisms and creates possible conditions that may invalidate your termite warranty. The last two disadvantages are notes because spray foam insulation can hide evidence of pest activity. For a full list of advantages and disadvantages visit <https://www.greeninsulationtechnologies.com/advantages-disadvantages-foam.php>

Polystyrene Spray Foam Insulation, Termites and Other Pests

Insect and rodent pests such as termites, carpenter ants and rats can easily chew through spray foam insulation which also provides insulation benefits to those pest populations. The presence of such pests within or behind the PSFI makes visual inspection and control problematic, if not impossible.

Polystyrene spray foam insulation impairs the ability of pest management inspectors from performing a visual inspection for evidence of a pest infestation, intrusion or damage. There are currently no inspection tools that can overcome how PSFI prevents visual inspection for pests.

Georgia Structural Pest Control regulations require pest management inspectors to determine the presence or previous presence of infestations and report these findings for Official Wood Infestation Inspection Reports and related control warranties. These inspections will include a visual inspection and the sounding and/or probing of accessible areas.

Polystyrene Spray Foam Insulation and Fumigation

Research has been conducted on PSFI to determine if other chemicals damage the integrity of the foam insulation. Research is, however, lacking on how fumigation gasses interact with polystyrene spray foam insulation. The result is that there are no scientific studies that provide information on using fumigation to control pests found to be infesting building materials covered with PSFI. There also are no established post-fumigation, re-entry or re-occupancy times or post-occupancy ventilation needs.

Spray Foam and Termite Warranties:

Pest Management companies typically include language in their contracts that the installation of products that prevent visual inspection may negatively affect or void a termite warranty. The SPCC recommends homeowners contact their Pest Management provider or consult with one for a review of how installation of PSFI could impact their pest control contract.

Spray Foam Insulation & Termites publication by the American Chemistry Council (ACC) and Spray Polyurethane Foam Alliance (SPFA)

<https://polyurethane.americanchemistry.com/Spray-Foam-Insulation-and-Termites.pdf>

This publication does reference, on page 13, that Georgia has modified the model energy code to include a termite inspection strip above and below the foundation wall to expose the sill plate and lower band/rim joist for visual inspection. The SPCC has concerns about the general use and practicality of the inspection equipment referenced in Chapter II. Termite Inspection and Treatment. The SPCC Rules call for a visual inspection for wood destroying pests and the utility of using thermal imaging, moisture meters, microwave motion detection, gas or acoustic emissions, or trained dogs for detecting a pest infestation through PSFI have not been adequately tested. The following image shows installation of SPFI in a Georgia home that does not include the required termite inspection strip.

