



# SUBSTANDARD IMPORTS THREATEN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES AND JOBS

**Strengthening U.S. infrastructure is a national security imperative that requires a steady supply of American-made cement. Despite the essential role cement plays in our society, the U.S. relies on high volumes of imported cement. These imports are not held to the same rigorous standards as U.S. products, raising serious questions about competition and quality.**

Recent history shows us that when low-quality, low-transparency imports undercut U.S. products and make their way into our markets, there can be serious health and economic consequences. We rely on cement to build our communities, from neighborhood homes and businesses to critical public infrastructure like hospitals and ports. We need to take action now that will bolster U.S. production and protect American consumers and construction workers from substandard products.



## QUALITY ASSURANCE AND IMPORT TRANSPARENCY

The U.S. cement industry relies on standards laid out by ASTM International and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials to ensure important quality and standard controls to keep our infrastructure safe and dependable. These standards are used for portland cement and blended cements, which create the concrete our construction industry relies on.

As an essential national resource, the demand for cement is not going away, which is why the U.S. must support the domestic cement industry and insist on high product standards. Foreign cement may be missing certification and tracking information that makes it difficult to verify product origin and quality, and substandard packaging and handling can harm workers and consumers.

**IN 2024, 22% OF CEMENT CONSUMED IN THE U.S. CAME FROM IMPORTS.**

SOURCE: [U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY](#)

## IMPORTS GONE WRONG

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### CONTAMINATED DRYWALL

Between 2004 and 2007, roughly 100,000 American homes were constructed using toxic drywall imported from China. The drywall was used in over 20 states, saddling Americans who resided in contaminated housing with high relocation and rebuilding costs and adverse health effects such as headaches and respiratory ailments. In Louisiana, around 200 houses constructed for victims of Hurricane Katrina were contaminated by the toxic drywall, which was believed to be American-made but instead came from China.

### FAULTY STEEL

The reconstruction of California's San Francisco Bay Bridge faced cost overruns and safety issues, in part due to the hiring of a Chinese firm with no prior bridge-construction experience. The company, Zhenhua Port Machinery Co., was contracted to provide substandard Chinese steel and build key portions of the bridge, purportedly for cost savings. U.S. safety standards were relaxed in the process, leading to cracks in steel welds caused by improper construction practices and severely undermining bridge safety.

### TOXIC TOYS

From 2005 to 2007, toxic toys imported from China were sold in stores nationwide to American families and children. The Thomas and Friends Wooden Railway toys were contaminated with lead, which can cause devastating health and developmental effects, including long-term neurological problems. About 1.5 million toys were affected by the recall, posing a serious health threat to communities nationwide.

### HAZARDOUS TOOTHPASTE

In 2007, reports revealed that a hazardous chemical, diethylene glycol, had been found in toothpaste manufactured in China that was distributed to discount retailers in the U.S. The contaminated toothpaste was found in multiple locations across the country, including North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Puerto Rico. In Panama, cough syrup containing the same toxic substance from China led to the deaths of 51 people.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATION

America requires access to the best possible construction materials to build durable communities that last. To achieve this, policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels of government must support import transparency policies that encourage compliance with U.S. rules and regulations that are intended to keep Americans safe.

### OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Require relevant federal agencies and state transportation departments to publish annual "Import Reliance Reports" on construction materials.
- Require importers to produce cement mill certificates and ASTM and other quality control tests that ensure products entering the market meet American production standards.