

# White Paper

## Spray Polyurethane Foam Insulation

### Building Code Committee



During the 2018 midyear meeting, the Building Code Committee agreed to explore challenges posed by Spray Polyurethane Foam Insulation (SPFI). As with other conducive conditions in structures, such as wood to ground contact, rigid foam board and concrete foam insulation below grade, the ability for termites to go unnoticed in SPFI can result in damage complaints by homeowners. Spray foam can be applied to any number of construction features. When applied in attics, walls, and crawl spaces, spray foam can significantly improve a home's energy efficiency. However, when applied over structural timbers it is often impossible to inspect for termites and other wood destroying organisms (WDOs). This potentially jeopardizes the home's warranty related to WDOs. This white paper explores the challenges that Pest Management Professionals and state lead regulatory agencies have experienced with SPFI, reviews related Building Code Committee activities, and encourages states to work with their respective building code officials to consider codes that require inspection gaps.

ASPCRO Building Code Committee members consist of state lead agency (SLA) officials, the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), educators and industry representatives. Committee members agree that SPFI applied in attics, basements and crawl spaces can increase a home's energy efficiency, but make it difficult to inspect for termites and other wood destroying insects, as noted in a Georgia Department of Agriculture consumer notice

<http://agr.georgia.gov/improperly-installed-spray-foam-insulation-could-impact-ability-to-protect-from-termites.aspx> and a NPMA's

Consumer Alert

[https://nmpapestworld.org/default/assets/File/Resource%20Center/ConsumerAlert\\_SprayFoam\\_v2.pdf](https://nmpapestworld.org/default/assets/File/Resource%20Center/ConsumerAlert_SprayFoam_v2.pdf). SPFI should, at a minimum, include an inspection gap.



Figure 1 Subterranean Termite tubes emerging from behind spray foam insulation installed over floor joists in a crawl space.

In order to evaluate SLA SPFI awareness and resulting actions, ASCPCRO prepared and distributed a survey in February of 2019. The survey, completed by 22 states, revealed that 5 states to date have received SPFI complaints and one enforcement action was taken. The enforcement action involved failure to report an inaccessible area on a WDO report. According to the survey, 4 states reference building codes in their pesticide regulations and 3 states have either building codes or pesticide regulations that require inspection gaps. Survey results can be viewed in the Spray Foam Insulation folder of the Library tab at:

[http://www.aspcro.org/documents/sprayfoam/PSFI\\_Summary %20Data All 190325.pdf](http://www.aspcro.org/documents/sprayfoam/PSFI_Summary_%20Data_All_190325.pdf).

The Spray Polyurethane Foam Alliance and the American Chemical Council address questions pertaining to, inspection for, and treatment of, potential termite infestations in buildings using SPF insulation in the attached file:

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

ASPCRO plans to increase the awareness of the challenges with SPFI and encourages states to work with their building code regulatory agencies on the importance of inspection gaps. ASCPCRO has joined the International Code Council (ICC) allowing access to state code official contacts. Contact [ASPCRO](#) for a list of your state's building code agency contacts. ASCPCRO's ICC membership will allow monitoring of industry news, proposed building codes and building practices that could impact structural pest control. If you would like additional information or are interested in joining ASCPCRO's Building Code Committee contact [ASPCRO's Executive Secretary](#).



Photo credit. F. Oi, UF/IFAS

*Figure 2. Spray foam insulation in an attic rendering this area inaccessible for inspection.*