

Maine maker protests China textile imports

BY DARREN FISHELL
BDN STAFF

PORTLAND — A Maine industrial textile manufacturer has asked federal trade officials to impose duties on imported silica fabric from China, arguing that the products are unfairly subsidized by the Chinese government.

Auburn Manufacturing Inc., the largest producer of that insulating industrial fabric, said Thursday that it filed a petition with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. International Trade Commission to investigate Chinese imports of certain amorphous silica fabric.

The Mechanic Falls-based company also has complained that the imports fail to comply with federal requirements for the U.S. Department of Defense to buy only textiles that have at least 50 percent of U.S.-made content.

“In the long run, if these unfair practices are not curbed, the U.S. military will suffer because it will be unable to source these products from U.S. companies,” the company said in a news release about the petition. “The filing of the petition was necessary to keep AMI as a viable supplier to the Navy and to protect textile workers in Maine.”

The petition asks federal regulators to begin investigating and determine whether the Chinese government has subsidized silica fabric imports and whether those subsidies meet requirements for imposing duties on those imports.

Auburn Manufacturing, founded in 1979, makes a variety of textile products for extreme temperature applications.

Bangor Chamber warns of ad scam

BY RYAN MCLAUGHLIN
BDN STAFF

BANGOR — The Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce is alerting the public

Feds suspend Cigna Medicare plans

Enrollment halted for ‘widespread failures’

BY CAROLINE HUMER
REUTERS

The U.S. government has suspended new enrollment in Cigna Corp.’s Medicare Advantage health insurance and prescription drug plans, saying Cigna had “widespread and systemic failures” that prevented patients from accessing medical services.

The government said Cigna did not handle complaints and grievances properly from patients who had been denied coverage for health benefits or drugs, according to a Jan. 21 letter from its regulator, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid.

Officials also found problems with its list of covered drugs and said it did not handle its requests for prior authorization and exceptions as it should have.

These deficiencies posed “a serious threat to the health and safety of Medicare beneficiaries” and followed years of noncompliance, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid said in the letter.

Cigna said in a regulatory filing the suspension, effective immediately, does not affect members currently enrolled in the plans.

“The findings in the audit are unacceptable and will be addressed in full partnership with CMS,” Herb Fritch, president of its Medicare Advantage business, Cigna-HealthSpring, said in an e-mailed statement.

“We have internal quality review processes in place that identified some of the areas in advance of the audit

findings and we have already started working to remedy them. In other instances, we will implement the changes as quickly as possible,” he said.

Cigna shares fell 1.2 percent to \$138.50 in midday trading.

Open enrollment for 2016 Medicare Advantage plans closed in December but individuals can enroll throughout the year as they turn 65 years old or if they qualify under special circumstances.

Because open enrollment has closed, the impact on 2016 earnings is expected to be minimal, Leerink Partners analyst Ana Gupta said. Medicare Advantage contributes about 10 to 12 percent of the company’s earnings, she said in a research note.

Cigna and other private health insurers manage healthcare and drug benefits for older and disabled people under the government-paid Medicare program. It is overseen by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The agency has suspended other insurers in the past such as Aetna Inc. Aetna’s April 2010 suspension was lifted in July 2011.

Sanctions will remain in place until Cigna makes changes and the problems are deemed unlikely to recur, according to the letter. Cigna is due to submit a corrective plan by Jan. 29.

Cigna plans to be bought by Anthem Inc. in a \$45 billion deal, under review by antitrust regulators.

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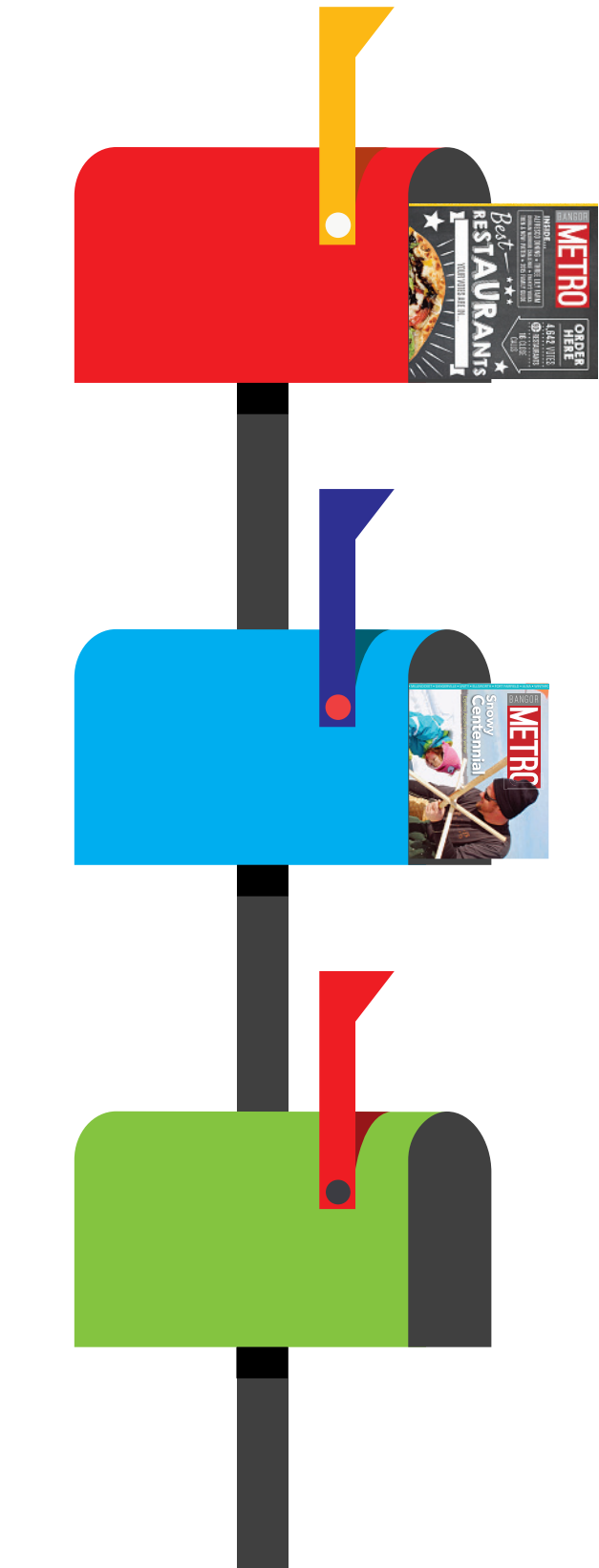
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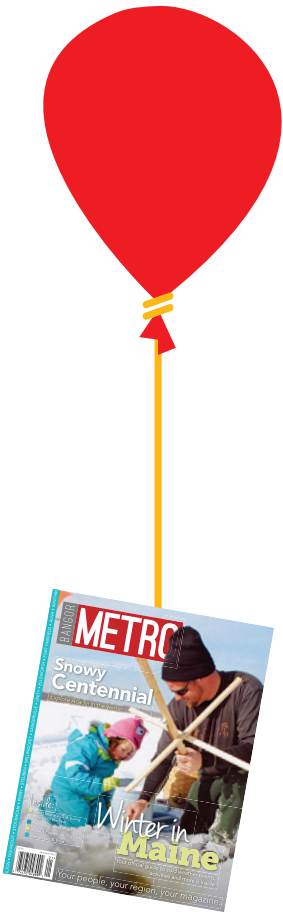
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