

## Pressure-Treated Wood: *Going, Going, Going...*

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On February 12, 2002, EPA announced a voluntary decision by industry to move consumer use of treated lumber products away from a variety of pressure-treated wood that contains arsenic by December 31, 2003, in favor of new alternative wood preservatives.

This action comes years ahead of the completion of the EPA's regulatory and scientific assessment of CCA. The EPA says this change will result in substantial reductions in potential exposure to CCA. Thus, the EPA has not concluded that CCA-treated wood poses any unreasonable risk to the public or the environment. However, because arsenic is a known human carcinogen, the EPA says it believes that any reduction in the levels of potential exposure to arsenic is desirable. EPA says that the voluntary transition to non-arsenical containing wood preservatives for residential sites is a responsible action by the registrants.

This transition affects virtually ALL RESIDENTIAL uses of wood treated with chromated copper arsenate, also known as CCA, including wood used

in, but not limited to, play-structures, decks, picnic tables, landscaping timbers, residential fencing, and patios and walkways & boardwalks. By January 2004, EPA will not allow CCA products for ANY of these residential uses. This decision will, as the EPA puts it, "facilitate the voluntary transition to new alternative wood preservatives that do not contain arsenic in both the manufacturing and retail sectors."

After December 31, 2003, wood treaters will no longer be able to use CCA to treat wood intended for use in decks, picnic tables, landscaping timbers, gazebos, residential fencing, patios, walkways boardwalks, and play-structures. Wood treated prior to this date, however, can still be used in residential settings. Already built structures containing CCA-treated wood are not affected by this action. The EPA says that existing CCA treated wood structures do not need to be removed.

What are the alternatives to using CCA treated wood? The EPA says that a number of preservatives have been registered, and wood products treated with these

preservatives are expected to be available in the marketplace. There is no indication by the EPA as to when these products will be available.

Also, the EPA says that untreated wood (e.g., cedar and redwood) and nonwood alternatives, such as plastics, metal, and composite materials are available now. They say that your local hardware store or lumberyard can provide more information about available alternatives. So this is what we've been saving the redwoods for.

While CCA treated wood could still be used in public situations and commercial settings, it is my opinion that the public will in some cases not want CCA treated wood used in some public settings (e.g. schools, parks), and some commercial settings will not want it used as well. Also, there may be clients who want CCA treated wood removed from landscapes and other sites and replaced with some alternative material(s). And even CCA treated wood needs replacing after a number of years.

I don't know what the manufacturers will do at this point in terms of other uses.

Dropping residential use out of the use picture means that at some point they may just discontinue CCA treated wood entirely. If they do not the price may go up. Also, alternative materials are now usually more costly and this is not likely to change. I don't know exactly what that new treatments are, or when they will be available and what the cost of these treated wood products will be. What is clear is that the segments of the pest control industry doing damage repair and wood replacement needs to start looking now at the options and their dollar costs. Any jobs using CCA treated wood, or not, are about to cost you more.

Before you begin replacing CCA treated wood in any situation, either due to it's deterioration, or because of client concerns, check first how you will be able to dispose of this old wood. The EPA says you may dispose of this wood as "ordinary trash". This has always been the case but there may be some initial confusion over its status after this change. In any case, commercial disposal of such materials is often subject to disposal fees and you will need to cost this in to any job.

There has been information on handling precautions, and disposal, of CCA treated wood available for some time. The EPA says that you

may dispose of treated wood by ordinary trash collection. Treated wood should not be burned in open fires or in stoves, fireplaces, or residential boilers because toxic chemicals may be produced as part of the smoke and ashes. Never use it as compost or mulch.

Treated wood from commercial or industrial use (e.g., construction sites) may be burned only in commercial or industrial incinerators or boilers in accordance with state and Federal regulations.

The EPA also says to avoid frequent or prolonged inhalation of sawdust from treated wood. When sawing, sanding, and machining treated wood, wear a dust mask. Whenever possible, these operations should be performed outdoors to avoid indoor accumulations or airborne sawdust from treated wood.

When power-sawing and machining, wear goggles to protect eyes from flying particles. Wear gloves when working with the wood. After working with the wood, and before eating, drinking, using the toilet, and use of tobacco products, wash exposed areas thoroughly.

Because preservatives or sawdust may accumulate on clothes, they should be laundered before reuse. Wash

work clothes separately from other household clothing.

See these web pages for more complete information. You should be ready to answer client questions on the use of CCA treated wood and what the alternatives may be to fit their needs.

EPA: Manufacturers to Use New Wood Preservatives, Replacing Most Residential Uses of CCA - Q&A Regarding CCA Transition Process  
<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/1file.htm>

EPA: What You Need to Know About Wood Pressure Treated with Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA) - Questions & Answers  
[http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/cca\\_qa.htm](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/cca_qa.htm)

IEPA: Inorganic Arsenical Pressure-Treated Wood - Consumer Safety Information Sheet  
[http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/cca\\_consumer\\_safety.htm#presentation](http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/cca_consumer_safety.htm#presentation)

You can also go to these sites from our web site, under "Homeowner Pesticide Information" at  
<http://entweb.clemson.edu/pesticide/saftyed/homeuse.htm#pressure>

*Most of the information in this article came from EPA produced information.*

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