



## Treated Wood Industry in Transition

For almost 70 years, a preservative called “Chromated Copper Arsenate” or CCA has been safely used in a wide range of wood products. It has served as the leading wood preservative in the United States and throughout the world for hundreds of building applications ranging from decks and patios to wood-framed homes to salt water marine structures. Since inception in 1933, CCA has been one of the preferred choices for pressure treating wood products.

However, its sound reputation was not without controversy. In the 1970’s environmental groups focused on perceived health dangers to workers in the preservative industry. In the 1980’s, environmentalists questioned the effects of CCA-treated wood on aquatic environments. But, in that same decade, the Environmental Protection Agency determined the benefits of CCA far outweighed any perceived risks. Then in the 1990’s, the focus changed to the perceived danger surrounding CCA disposal. By the year 2000, their concerns turned to arsenic exposure from CCA-treated playground equipment. Although the alleged risks were scientifically unfounded, the spotlight never faded.

In response to market perceptions, the leading wood preservative manufacturers voluntarily amended their respective label registrations with the EPA for CCA in 2002, and initiated a transition to the manufacture of a new generation of wood preservatives for use in non-industrial treated wood products by December 31, 2003.

The new generations of preserved wood are primarily three types of products — Ammoniacal Copper Quat (ACQ), Copper Boron Azole (CBA), and Copper Azole (CA-B). They are being marketed under such brands as ACQ Preserve®, NatureWood® and Wolmanized® Natural Select™ wood. As with

CCA, the new preservatives have been approved for use by the EPA and extend the life of wood products from just a few years to decades.

Manufacturers will continue to produce CCA for industrial end use applications such as highway construction, utility poles and pilings.

If your structure is built with CCA treated wood, it is fine. The EPA does not recommend its removal.

## Preserved Wood Enters New Generation: Questions and Answers

Here are the answers from the Treated Wood Council to the most frequently asked questions about this transition:

### ■ *Why did the industry make this transition?*

Preservative manufacturers have been in discussions with the EPA as part of the periodic review and re-registration process for CCA, the most widely used preservative on the market today.

Since early 2001, the policy debate about new standards for arsenic in drinking water has prompted substantial media attention. Although treated wood represents a tiny fraction compared to all the natural sources of arsenic in the environment, the preservative manufacturers have developed new lines of non-arsenic-based preservatives. To be responsive to current and anticipated customer interest, the manufacturers told EPA they would complete the transition to these new-generation preservatives for non-industrial wood products by the end of 2003.

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## Questions and Answers *continued*

### ■ *Is CCA-treated wood safe?*

Absolutely. Study after study has shown it is safe. One analysis by the Florida Department of Health shows that a child would have to eat a spoonful of dirt — taken from right next to a CCA treated playset — every day, for 30 years, before there would be a potential health effect.

### ■ *If CCA-treated wood is safe, why change?*

The fundamental safety of CCA-treated wood has not changed, but perceptions in the marketplace have. The preserved wood industry stands by the safety of all wood products treated with CCA, which have been used for nearly 70 years. Manufacturers have made a decision to be responsive to customer interest in new preservatives that provide the same benefits of CCA-treated wood. The time is right now because the industry has developed this new generation of preservatives and can begin the transition.

### ■ *What are these new generation preservatives?*

The manufacturers have developed a number of excellent new preservatives that have been in use for more than a decade. Wood treated with the new-generation preservatives is marketed under the names ACQ Preserve®, NatureWood® and Wolmanized® Natural Select™ wood. These products use copper-based preservatives with organic co-biocides.

### ■ *Are the new preservatives safe?*

The new preservatives have been studied extensively and approved for use by EPA. Like CCA, they protect and extend the life of wood products for decades.

### ■ *Are these products available today?*

Yes, sufficient supplies of wood products treated with the new preservatives are on the market today.

### ■ *Will the new generation preserved wood products cost more?*

Yes, the price difference is approximately 10 percent to 20 percent higher.

### ■ *Will CCA pressure treated wood still be available for consumer use?*

Yes. Wood treated with CCA before December 31, 2003, can continue to be processed through the normal commerce chain. However, by mid-2004, these inventories will be exhausted and only CCA treated plywood, shakes and shingles will be available for consumer use.

### ■ *Can I do anything to prevent exposure from CCA-treated wood?*

First of all, studies show that people could be exposed to 30-times more arsenic from food and water and other natural sources than they get from contact with CCA-preserved wood. But if anyone is still concerned about exposure, there are simple steps that can be taken to minimize it — such as covering wooden tables before eating and regular hand washing. If you work with preserved wood, safe handling instructions are detailed in the EPA-approved Consumer Safety Information Sheet. For a copy, visit <http://www.ccasafetyinfo.com/>. Industrial users should request a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) from their supplier.

### ■ *Do you recommend the use of sealants?*

While EPA has mentioned this possibility, the agency has also stated that CCA-treated wood doesn't pose "unreasonable risks to the public" as is. Sealants are not necessary from a health standpoint.

### ■ *Why use preservatives at all?*

Preservatives make — and keep — the wood products sturdy, stable and safe. They prevent decay, termite damage and extend the life of the products from just a few years to decades.