



Treated Wood and the Uniform Building Code

The Uniform Building Code recognizes the problems inherent in certain applications and the effectiveness of properly treated wood in enduring those situations. For some applications, the code requires treated wood; for others it allows either pressure-treated wood or a wood classified as naturally resistant to decay.

The following excerpts are references to treated wood taken from the 1994 Uniform Building Code (unless otherwise noted):

Chapter 23 -- WOOD

SECTION 2301.1

STANDARD OF QUALITY

Treated lumber and plywood must meet the appropriate specifications of the American Wood-Preservers' Association (AWPA), which is the standard-setting organization for the treated wood industry. AWPA standards include rules for the amount of preservative necessary (retention level), depth of penetration, allowable species, and drying, among other characteristics.

SECTION 2305

IDENTIFICATION

In 1996, Section 2305 of the 1997 UBC was changed to read: "All preservatively treated wood required to be treated by Section 2317 shall be identified by the quality mark of an inspection agency which has been accredited by an accreditation body which complies with the requirements of the American Lumber Standard Committee Treated Wood Program, or equivalent."

SECTION 2304.3.2

PRESERVATIVE TREATMENT

The values for wood pressure impregnated with an approved process and preservative need no adjustment for treatment but are subject to other adjustments.

SECTION 2317

DECAY AND TERMITE PROTECTION

2317.2 Wood Support Embedded in Ground. Except for certain water-submerged conditions, wood embedded in the ground or in direct contact with the earth and used to support permanent structures shall be treated wood. Likewise, posts, poles, and timber columns supporting permanent structures which are embedded in concrete exposed to earth or weather shall be treated wood.

2317.3 Under-floor Clearance. When wood joists or the bottoms of wood structural floors are closer than 18 inches to exposed ground or unexcavated areas, the floor assembly must be treated wood or an approved naturally resistant wood.

2317.4 Plates and Sills. "All foundation plates or sills and sleepers on a concrete or masonry slab, which is in direct contact with earth, and sills which rest on concrete or masonry foundations, shall be treated wood or foundation redwood, all marked or branded by an approved agency." Although, incising is required for most Western species, AWPA does not require it for the pressure treatment of Ponderosa Pine or Southern Yellow Pine because of their physical characteristics.

2317.8 Wood and Earth Separation. Wood that is in permanent structures and nearer than 6 inches to earth shall be treated wood or a naturally resistant wood.

2317.11 Retaining Walls. "Wood used in retaining or crib walls shall be treated wood."

2317.12 Weather Exposure. In geographical areas where needed, wood members which support buildings, balconies, or porches shall be treated wood or naturally resistant wood if exposed to weather and without adequate cover protection.

Refer to Chapter 18 of the UBC for treated wood foundations and round wood piling requirements.