



MEDIA ADVISORY

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COATINGS NOT NECESSARY FOR TREATED WOOD PRODUCTS

Washington, D.C.-- On May 11th the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) jointly announced the interim results of separate ongoing studies on the use of coatings on CCA-treated wood structures. Both agencies emphasize that these are preliminary results, and the studies will be continuing for another year. EPA recommends the public be "very cautious about interpretation" of these early results. Neither agency recommends that CCA-treated wood structures should be coated. Instead, both EPA and CPSC make clear that a decision about whether to coat an existing structure is a matter of personal choice. In addition, ***EPA has reiterated its earlier conclusion that it is not recommending that existing structures or surrounding soils be removed or replaced.***

Should homeowners use a coating product on their decks due to concerns about arsenic exposure?

Coatings of any kind are **not** necessary. CCA-treated wood products have been used safely and effectively for more than 70 years. Arsenic is a naturally-occurring element that people are exposed to every day from soil, water and food. While exposures to very high levels of arsenic may be detrimental, the amount of arsenic individuals might be exposed to on a CCA-treated wood structure is extremely low. When compared over a lifetime with background sources such as diet and drinking water, the level of arsenic exposure is insignificant. The lifetime level of potential exposure from CCA-treated wood, as determined by EPA's hypothetical assumptions, is 50 fold less than arsenic exposure from diet and drinking water, and over 200 fold less when using actual data from recent studies conducted on playsets alone.

The CPSC came to this conclusion in its review of CCA-treated wood in 2003:

"Over a lifetime, arsenic exposures from food, especially certain foods such as rice, other grains and meats; drinking water; and other sources could be much larger than exposures from playground equipment during childhood."

This conclusion is supported by experts who have looked at the issue. A study recently completed by the Department of Pediatrics at the University of California-Davis (*West et al., 2004*) analyzed cancer statistics provided by the National Cancer Institute from 1973-1999 and concluded that:

...the incidence of cancer known to be associated with arsenic exposure is either unchanged or decreased in age groups that would have been exposed to CCA-preserved wood structures during childhood. The rate of arsenic-related cancers has been the same or decreasing over the time in which CCA preserved wood has been sold in the United States. Thus, these data provide preliminary evidence suggesting that there has not been an increase in arsenic associated cancers during the period of extensive use of CCA-preserved wood in the United States.

What do other experts say about the safety of CCA-treated wood?

Numerous scientific and medical experts have found that CCA-treated wood is safe when used as recommended. The statements below, from a wide range of scientific and medical sources, offer compelling evidence that no adverse health effects are associated with exposure to CCA-treated wood.

Louis Sullivan, M. D., former secretary of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services and president emeritus of Morehouse School of Medicine:

...I concluded that children are safe, and that play structures constructed of this material have not been shown to pose a risk to health or safety...public health judgments must be based on research and evidence and the evidence does not show that CCA-treated wood play structures are unsafe.

Gilbert Ross, M. D., medical director of the American Council on Science and Health:

We have found that there is no risk to human health. There has never been any evidence that a human being has ever been harmed by it. There is no evidence that children are exposed to toxic levels of arsenic from playing on pressure treated wood.

Professors Craig E. Shuler and Patrick J. Pellicane of the Colorado State University College of Natural Resources:

CCA-treated wood is a tested product offering minimal risks and substantial benefits. Its many real advantages are underscored by sound scientific research attesting to its safety; those advantages should not be overshadowed by ill-conceived, unfounded scare tactics.

What is the purpose of coatings?

Coatings are designed to maintain the aesthetic appearance of wood. The use of such products is not necessary to extend the life of treated wood.