

What you should know about **CCA-treated Wood**

Sealants help protect children from arsenic in treated wood

Chromated copper arsenate, or CCA, is a pesticide that has been used for years in pressure-treating lumber to prevent destruction from rot and insects. Arsenic, a toxic chemical, can leach from this treated wood, leaving residues on the wood's surface and in nearby soil. Young children who play on or near decks or playscapes made from CCA-treated wood can get arsenic on their skin and into their bodies, especially if they eat or drink without washing their hands.

Because of the health risks of long-term exposure to arsenic, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced that as of December 31, 2003, arsenic will no longer be used in treating wood to be used for decks, picnic tables, landscaping timbers, gazebos, residential fencing, patios, walkways, boardwalks, and play-structures. However, children will still be coming into contact with existing outdoor structures made of the wood for some time to come.

Rather than removing existing playground structures or decks built with CCA-treated wood, you can protect children, pets and others from possible arsenic exposure from the wood by following these recommendations from the N.C. Division of Public Health:

Public Health Recommendations

- Seal existing treated-wood structures every 1-2 years with a weather-resistant coating such as an oil-based, semi-transparent stain. Penetrating sealants form a barrier on the wood surface that can significantly reduce the amount of arsenic released from the wood while also protecting and preserving the wood.
- Keep children and pets away from under-deck areas, where arsenic may have leached.
- Make sure children wash their hands thoroughly after playing on wood structures, especially before eating or drinking.
- Since the soil under previously-unsealed wood playstructures may contain arsenic, use a buffer such as natural (untreated) wood chips or sand under the structures.
- Do not use mulch or wood chips made from CCA-treated wood.
- Food should not come into direct contact with any treated wood. Cover tables with tablecloths.

- Treated wood should not be used where it may come into direct or indirect contact with drinking water.
- Do not sand CCA-treated structures or power-wash by highly abrasive means.
- Do not use CCA-treated wood to build picnic tables, garden beds or compost bins, and do not grow edible plants near CCA-treated decks.
- Do not burn CCA-treated wood, as toxic chemicals may be released in the smoke and become concentrated in the ashes.
- Cut CCA-treated wood outdoors and wear a dust mask, goggles and gloves. Clean up all sawdust, scraps and other construction debris and dispose of in the trash.
- After working with CCA-treated wood, wash exposed skin, especially hands, with soap and water before eating, drinking or using tobacco products. Wash work clothes separately from other household clothing before wearing them again.
- Homeowners who are planning to add or repair a deck, playground or other outdoor structures should look for arsenic-free alternatives such as redwood, cedar, arsenic-free treated wood, plastics, composite materials or metal.

For more information, see the N.C. Division of Public Health's arsenic webpage at www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/oii/cca.html or the EPA's CCA website at www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/1file.htm. Or call the Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch at (919)707-5900.