

Guidance Note

Disposal of treated wood

November 2016

South African Wood Preservers Association



The South African Wood Preservers Association (SAWPA) provides this information for general guidance, and believes that it is accurate based upon available information.

Preservative treated wood

Preservative treated wood is wood that has been treated with one or more chemicals intended to protect it from wood-boring insects, termites and rot (decay). In South Africa the two types of preservatives mostly used are coal tar creosote-based preservatives and copper-based preservatives, i.e. CCA, CuAz and ACQ. In addition, small volumes are treated with boron-based and light organic solvent preservatives, i.e. TBTN-P and Azole permethrin, which are colourless. Information on the different preservative types can be obtained from the SAWPA Guidance Note: Preservatives for pressure treatment of wood. Surface applied coatings, such as paint, varnish and stain are not considered wood preservatives.

Treated wood waste

Treated wood waste includes treated wood debris from construction activities and may include trimmings, offcuts, scrap and sawdust. Treated wood waste also includes demolition products that have been permanently removed from use, e.g. decks, fences, docks and vineyard poles.

Reuse or recycling

Treated wood materials may be reused in a way that is consistent with their original use. Recycled treated wood is not considered to be waste material.

Identifying treated wood waste

The following evaluation tools can help you to determine if the wood waste has been treated:

- The wood may be identified by an ink brand or an end tag indicating treatment. Most treated wood used in construction will be branded in some way.
- Material that has been treated with copper-based treatments (CCA, ACQ, CuAz) and that has not been stained or painted, generally has a greenish colour.
- A cross-cut section of the wood may reveal the preservative treatment as a darker colour, particularly in the sapwood.
- The location of the wood within a project (i.e. exposure and application) and the project type may also suggest the presence of treated wood.
- If the wood, which is not of a decay-resistant species (naturally durable), was in contact with the ground or water, or exposed to the elements and is still in a sound condition, it is likely to have been preservative treated.
- If a freshly cross-cut piece smells of solvent, then the piece has most likely been treated with a light organic solvent preservative.

- If doubt remains after applying the above evaluation tools, spraying the wood with a suitable chemical reagent, or testing it in a laboratory, can make a positive determination.

How and where can I dispose of treated wood waste?

- Never burn treated wood waste.
- Do not discard the material on the land or use treated wood waste, e.g. sawdust and shavings, as ground mulch.
- Do not use treated wood waste, e.g. sawdust and shavings for animal bedding.
- Use some types of treated wood (excluding CCA) as fuel in specifically approved cogeneration facilities.
- Dispose of small quantities of treated wood waste, such as offcuts generated during home projects, through normal household waste collection services or at local landfills.
- Do not place treated wood waste in any green waste or garden organics recycling bins.
- Trade users of treated timber, dispose of offcuts and redundant pieces through normal commercial waste collection services or at local landfills.

Handling treated wood waste

- Wear gloves and long-sleeved shirts.
- After handling, wash exposed skin areas thoroughly with mild soap and water.
- Avoid frequent or prolonged inhalation of sawdust. Wear a dust mask when machining any wood to reduce the inhalation of wood dust. This applies to all wood dust, not only wastes containing preservative chemicals.
- Perform machining operations outdoors whenever possible to avoid indoor accumulations of airborne sawdust.
- Wear appropriate eye protection to reduce the potential for eye injury from wood particles and flying debris during machining.
- If preservative treated sawdust accumulates on clothes, launder before reuse.
- Wash work clothes separately from other household clothing.

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