

# What You Need to Know About



## Pressure-Treated Wood



July 2005  
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### WAYS TO REDUCE THE RISKS POSED BY CCA-TREATED WOOD

**SEAL** structures at least annually with an oil- or water-based penetrating wood sealant or stain that does not require sanding or pressure-washing. Periodically inspect for wear, and reseal as necessary.

**COVER** soil under playsets with pea gravel, sand or tire chips.

**AVOID** playing under decks or storing toys under decks.

**AVOID** using treated wood for framing in vegetable gardens. Line existing framing with plastic.

**CHILDREN SHOULD NOT EAT** while playing on wood structures.

**DO NOT PLACE** food directly on wood surfaces. Use tablecloths on picnic tables.

**WASH** hands thoroughly after contact with wood or soils surrounding the wood.

**USE** alternative materials to replace the structure.

### What is pressure-treated wood?

Wood is often injected under pressure with a pesticide to prevent rot and to make outdoor structures last longer. Pressure treatment is necessary to get the pesticide inside the wood pores, rather than on just the surface.

### What is CCA-treated wood?

Most pressure-treated wood sold for outdoor use in the United States from 1975 to the end of 2003 was treated with the pesticide, chromated copper arsenate (CCA). When new, CCA-treated wood has a green tinge. CCA-treated wood is commonly found in children's playsets, decks, picnic tables and landscaping materials.

### What are some concerns with using CCA-treated wood?

CCA contains arsenic, which is known to cause cancer. Arsenic can also cause skin discoloration and swelling, as well as the appearance of small corn or wart-like bumps on the palms, soles of feet and torso.

If not properly sealed, CCA-treated wood can release small amounts of arsenic, which can contaminate the surface of the wood or soils around and below the wood. Touching unsealed wood or soil can get arsenic on hands and clothing.

Frequent and long-term contact with arsenic, even in small amounts, may cause harmful health effects.

Exposure to arsenic can occur by swallowing, absorption through the skin or inhalation of dust from sawing or sanding.

### **Who is most at risk?**

Young children who regularly play on or around playsets or decks made with CCA-treated wood are most at risk. Children under age six frequently put their hands in their mouths, which increases their potential exposure to arsenic.

### **What precautions should I take when working with CCA-treated wood?**

- Saw, sand and machine the wood outdoors, and wear a dust mask, goggles and gloves.
- Clean up dust, scraps and other debris and dispose of in trash. Do not compost or use as mulch.
- Do not burn treated wood, since burning may cause the release of toxic chemicals in smoke and ash.
- After handling wood, wash clothing and all exposed areas of body.

### **Has CCA-treated wood been banned?**

As of January 1, 2004, CCA can no longer be used in the United States to treat wood sold for use in residential settings, such as playsets, decks or tables. However, stores are permitted to sell existing stocks of CCA-treated wood, so check before you buy.

In New York, Environmental Conservation Law § 37-0109 prohibits public entities such as state and local agencies, as well as school districts, from using CCA-treated wood for new structures in playgrounds. Existing treated wood structures in playgrounds, and all treated wood picnic tables, as well as any surrounding ground cover, must be maintained by public entities in such a way as to reduce the risk of CCA contamination.



### **What are some alternatives to CCA-treated wood?**

Alternative materials include: naturally rot-resistant woods such as cedar, plastic lumber, composite lumber, lumber treated with non-arsenic wood preservatives, and metal.

### **Where can I get more information?**

For more information, contact or visit the websites of the agencies listed below:

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. (Information regarding use, handling and disposal)  
[www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dshm/sldwaste/cca.html](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dshm/sldwaste/cca.html)

NYS Office of Attorney General  
(General information)  
[www.ag.ny.gov/](http://www.ag.ny.gov/)

US Environmental Protection Agency  
(Information regarding use, handling and disposal)  
[www.epa.gov/oppad001/reregistration/cca/](http://www.epa.gov/oppad001/reregistration/cca/)

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
(Arsenic Fact Sheet)  
[www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts2.html](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts2.html)