

Pressure-treated wood has dangers

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At the outset, let us explain that we have nothing against pressure-treated lumber.

However, to avoid injury, you should be aware of the potential dangers that exist.

Pressure-treated wood is normally light green or brown in color and is nothing more than good old-fashioned wood treated under high pressure with a pesticide. In the East and South, southern yellow pine is used and in the Midwest and North, Douglas fir and several other species of fir are the choice. The pesticide that is most commonly used for pressure treating is Chromated Copper Arsenate (CAA) - a compound that contains arsenic (rat poison).

Keep in mind, there are several degrees of toxicity (and danger) associated with the various types of pressure-treated lumber. Pressure-treated lumber that can be used in water contains the greatest amount of pesticide and should not be used around the home. A second level of chemical strength



qualifies the wood to be used in contact with earth (fence posts, retaining walls, etc.). This material could prove to be dangerous if used for decking or patio furniture. A third type of pressure-treated material is not meant to be used in contact with earth and most often is used for decks and furniture. Yes, even rat poison can be walked on if it is diluted enough.

To determine how much pesticide has been used to make the pressure-treated wood that you plan to purchase, look for the "treatment retention level" stamp somewhere on the board you are buying. A retention level of up to 0.25 is safe for decking and furniture. Pressure-treated wood that has a retention level higher than 0.25 should not be used in places where it will come into direct contact with your bare skin. For example: treated wood with a retention level of 0.40 is great for fence posts, but not for a picnic table.

Don't use pressure-treated lumber to make food containers for animals, cabinets for people or cutting boards.

Wood and water don't mix. And that is why pressure-treated wood became so popular. It resists rot, better than redwood or cedar. However, redwood and cedar do not

contain rat poison.

When handling pressure-treated wood, treat it as wood that contains a chemical that is not safe to ingest. When cutting, planing, grinding or chiseling it, be sure to wear a breathing mask. Also, it is a smart idea to wear eye protection. And most important, don't work with pressure-treated wood inside the home. Cut it in the great outdoors.

The Environmental Protection Agency tells us that clothing worn while working around pressure-treated wood should be washed separately. Wood scraps should be discarded in the trash and not burned.

We believe pressure-treated wood is most safe once covered with a heaping portion of oil-base primer followed by one or two more coats of your favorite colored oil-base finish.

Despite all the precautions you must take, with pressure-treated wood, you get more lasting quality for your money.

Visit our home page on the World Wide Web at www.onthehouse.com or send us an email at careybro@onthehouse.com.

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