



## U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Hal Stratton, *Chairman*  
Thomas H. Moore, *Commissioner*  
Mary Sheila Gall, *Commissioner*

### IN THIS ISSUE

CCA-Treated Wood.....	1
Portable Generators.....	3
Bleachers.....	4
Home Fire Losses.....	5
Lead Candle Wicks.....	5
Toys.....	6
MECAP News.....	8
CPSC Recalls.....	10

# CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY REVIEW

SPRING 2004  
VOL. 8, NO. 4

## CCA-Treated Wood

*The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) staff has been looking at possible health risks to children from wooden playground equipment treated with the chemical chromated copper arsenate (CCA). Patricia M. Bittner, M.S., in CPSC's Directorate for Health Sciences, is the Project Manager for this issue. She discusses it below.*

### ***What is CCA-treated wood?***

This is wood treated with a chemical preservative, CCA, to protect it from rotting by insects and microbial agents. CCA contains chromium, copper, and arsenic.

### ***What are the health risks associated with CCA-treated wood regarding children?***

Exposure to the arsenic in CCA-treated wood might increase a person's risk of developing lung or bladder cancer over a lifetime. CPSC staff believes there is a risk to young children who play on CCA-treated playground equipment and pick up arsenic residue on their hands. The children then put their hands in their mouths or on toys, food, or other objects that will go into their mouths.

### ***How did you determine there is an increased health risk?***

To estimate the potential exposure in children, CPSC staff scientists conducted a series of studies to measure how much arsenic comes off CCA-treated wood playgrounds onto a hand and onto a cloth that was wiped on the wood. We were then able to make a correlation between the amount of arsenic that came off on to the hand as compared with the cloth. We then tested playgrounds using the cloth wipes. Our staff used this information – along with data from toxicological studies on arsenic, estimates of how frequently children play on playgrounds, how much they ingest, and other factors – to estimate the increased risk of exposure to arsenic on CCA-treated wood playground equipment.

### ***Do all children have the same risk?***

An individual child's risk depends on many factors. These include the amount of arsenic released from the CCA-treated wood, the amount of arsenic picked up on the hands, the number of days and years the child plays on the wood, and the amount of arsenic transferred to the mouth by hand-to-mouth activity. In addition, arsenic occurs naturally in the air, soil, water, and in some foods.

### ***How great is the risk of getting cancer from CCA-treated wood?***

A number of factors play into anyone's risk of getting cancer over a lifetime – including environment, genetics, diet, and behaviors such as smoking. The risk from CCA-treated wood is in addition to these and represents an increased cancer risk.

***What can parents and caregivers do to minimize the risk to children?***

We recommend that parents and caregivers thoroughly wash children's hands with soap and water immediately after playing on CCA pressure-treated wood playground equipment. In addition, children shouldn't eat while on this playground equipment.

***Are adults at risk?***

We believe that the primary source of arsenic exposure is the typical hand-to-mouth behavior of children under six. Adults, however, should wash their hands after exposure to CCA-treated wood products and not put food directly on these surfaces. They also should use protective gear when cutting or working with this wood.

***How widely used is CCA-treated wood?***

Beginning in the 1930s, CCA was used to pressure-treat lumber for decks, playgrounds, and other outdoor equipment. Since the 1970s, most pressure-treated wood used in residential settings has been treated with CCA.

***Is CCA-treated wood still being used?***

Due to recent actions by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), wood for most consumer uses may no longer be treated with CCA. We expect that some stocks of wood already treated with CCA will still be found on shelves until mid-2004.

***How can you tell if your playground equipment is made from CCA-treated wood?***

It's difficult to distinguish CCA-treated wood after it ages from non-CCA-treated wood. Calling the manufacturer might help. If you know your wood playground equipment (or deck) is not constructed with redwood or cedar, it's likely that it was treated with CCA.

***Do public wood playground structures contain CCA?***

Older play structures at school and public playgrounds probably are made with CCA-treated wood.

***What can you do if your playground equipment is made of CCA-treated wood?***

Based on limited data, some groups suggest that applying certain penetrating coatings, such as oil-based, semi-transparent stains, on a regular basis (once a year or every other year depending upon wear and weathering) may reduce the amount of arsenic that comes out of the wood. CPSC and EPA staffs are conducting studies of coatings and sealants to determine effective ways to reduce the amount of arsenic released from CCA-treated wood. Early results are expected later this year.

***Are there alternatives to CCA?***

Some non-arsenic containing preservatives to pressure-treat wood for consumer uses are already available at retail outlets. Common ones are ammonium copper quaternary (ACQ) and copper boron azole (CBA). Because CCA is being phased out of the marketplace, wood treated with these alternatives will be more commonly available in 2004. Another alternative, of course, is to use naturally rot-resistant woods like cedar and redwood – or non-wood alternatives like metals, plastics, and composites.

***What should you do if you have an outdoor picnic table or deck made of CCA-treated wood?***

The same precautions apply. Everyone should wash their hands after touching these products and not put food directly on the wood surfaces.

**For More Information**

To learn more about CCA-treated wood, please go to [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). If you decide to remove your CCA-treated wood playset, EPA states that CCA-treated wood should never be burned in open fires, stoves, fireplaces, or residential boilers or ground up for mulch. Contact EPA at [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) or your state or local solid waste management office to receive instructions on how to dispose of CCA-treated wood.