

CITIZEN-TIMES.com

GREEN BUILDING: Building industry products go green

By Cindy Meehan-Patton
Shelter Ecology, Inc.
September 10, 2006 12:15 am

Part 3: Treated wood

Poisonous manmade chemicals that are added to one of our most treasured natural resources, wood, has created a set up for both problems and solutions to our world. Auto immune system diseases are on the rise, and a culprit is environmentally based poison.

It is close to impossible to walk into a building that does not have some plethora of toxins floating around in the air. We breathe that air, and these poisons are making many of us sick. I know first hand. On the other hand, treating wood to preserve it gives it longevity and increased rot and insect resistance when it is exposed to the outdoor elements. So let's look at some safe options for treated wood that are somewhat new to the market.

Pine, a relatively inexpensive wood, is the most commonly pressure treated wood in the industry. Thankfully, Copper Chromium Arsenate is being phased out of the pressure treated lumber industry.

A reportedly less toxic concoction is being used in its place: Ammonium Copper Quat. Quat is a swimming pool preservative that is supposedly safe for human consumption. ACQ (www.acq.com) still contains copper which, like arsenic, is very toxic to human and animal consumption.

On a more natural note, there is a 100 percent non toxic (to animals, humans and soil) mineral salt which acts as a wood preservative known as LifeTime Wood Treatment. Made in Canada and used for over 60 years in their building industry, this product is slowly being brought into the limelight of the building industry here in the states.

Unlike other wood treatments mentioned in this article, LifeTime (www.valhalco.com) can be applied by the consumer and is easy to ship because it is a simple little bag of salts (that is mixed with water). The one drawback is that it naturally patinas the wood it is applied to, making it look aged. This accelerated patina process actually gives the wood better UV protection over time.

Borates, a renewable mineral, have long been used to deter termites and other boring insects from wood. While they can be toxic to some organisms, they are still safer than copper and arsenate used in most pressure treated woods.

Louisiana Pacific (www.louisianapacific.com), a huge manufacturer and supplier of wood products for construction, offers some revolutionary engineered wood products that are treated with borates. Their SmartGaurd line includes an affordable siding and exterior trim product that is paint grade and offers a 30-year termite resistance guarantee. LP also offers roof, wall and subfloor sheathing which offers a 20-year termite resistance warranty.

This product does contain formaldehyde-based glues, but will hopefully switch over to the formaldehyde-free glue that I described in part 1 of this series on wood.

Timber Treatment Technologies (www.timbersil.com) has introduced TimberSIL, which relies on an inorganic mineralization process (rather than a toxicity process) for treating wood. The process actually makes the wood unrecognizable as a food source. The ingredient: sodium silicate or water glass. It is a non-edible, non-offgassing mineral.

The CEO of the company was driven to this invention through the huge increase in autism and its exposed link to heavy metal poisoning. Sodium silicate has been around for a long time with one of its uses being a flame retardant for wood products. Since its introduction, TimberSIL has won "product of the year" awards with trade magazines.

Less toxic options for our treated wood, an important industry, are available. Your smaller lumber yards and hardware suppliers are more likely to either carry these products, or are at least able to order them for you. This also gives you the opportunity to support your smaller local businesses.

Cindy Meehan-Patton, president of Shelter Ecology, Inc. is also a founder of the nonprofit Western North Carolina Green Building Council. Contact the council by visiting www.wncgbc.org, calling 232-5080 or emailing info@wncgbc.org.

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).
Copyright 2006 Asheville Citizen-Times. All rights reserved.