

CONSUMER ALERT

“TREATED TO REFUSAL” DOES NOT MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CODES

It is fairly common to find pressure treated wood bearing the mark “Treated to Refusal.” Some may interpret it to be the ultimate degree of protection, but what does it really mean?

To produce “Treated to Refusal” material, the manufacturer forces preservatives into the wood until it refuses to accept any more. It may meet proper penetration or retention for its intended building application...or it may not. The treater will not guarantee the product’s performance, nor will the product bear the quality mark of an accredited American Lumber Standard Committee (ALSC) inspection agency. In a sense, the term is somewhat of a product disclaimer.

There are many reasons why treaters choose to identify treated wood in this manner. Those factors may include:

- High moisture content in the wood prior to treatment. Excess water in the wood cells will prevent penetration of the preservatives under pressure.
- High percentage of impenetrable heartwood or refractory wood.
- A species, subspecies, or species group of wood recognized as difficult to treat.
- No or improper incising per the specifications for the species.
- In some cases, buyers will actually specify it.

Contractors that use or dealers that sell “Treated to Refusal” products could be in for an expensive lesson. To conform to the requirements of the International Building Code, treated wood must bear the quality mark of an accredited ALSC inspection agency. Because ALSC agencies do not recognize “Treated to Refusal” as a legitimate standard, they will not stamp it and therefore, the material is in violation of the IBC.

Recently, code officials in the Southwest discovered several residential projects that were in violation of the IBC because “Treated to Refusal” had been used in construction. Even though the projects were near completion, the contractors were forced to tear down the dwellings and replace the “Treated to Refusal” material with ALSC quality stamped treated wood...an unfortunate and very expensive mistake.

To help your customers avoid costly oversights, do not stock or purchase “Treated to Refusal” wood products. On purchase orders and project specifications, include: “Treated wood must be identified with the quality mark of an accredited ALSC agency.” Remember, ALSC agency logos are your assurance that the pressure treated wood you specify meets the requirements of the International Building Code.

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