

CCA treated timber

What is CCA treated timber?

CCA (copper, chrome, arsenate) timber treatments are primarily used on pine timber as protection from rotting and attack by fungus, termites or other wood boring insects. CCA timber has been used for over 60 years around the world, and has been registered in Australia for more than 20 years.

Where is it used?

CCA treated timber is largely used for outdoor structures such as playgrounds, decks, garden furniture, picnic tables, exterior seating and handrails.

Other uses that come into less contact with students include fencing, retaining walls, garden edges and pergolas.

Is CCA treated timber a risk?

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is the statutory authority with responsibility for the regulation of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in Australia. The APVMA released a report in March 2005 regarding a review of CCA treated timber and the risks of this material (see *Further Information*).

APVMA's review found that in the *absence* of suitable data, they could not be satisfied that the continuing use of CCA treated timber used in structures with which the public (particularly children) are likely to come into frequent and intimate contact is safe.

The APVMA has taken a cautious approach on this issue and has recommended that CCA treated timber is **not used** for any **new** garden furniture, picnic tables, exterior seating, children's play equipment, decking or handrails.

The department's approach

Although the APVMA has not banned other common uses of CCA treated timber such as building construction, fencing, poles, landscaping timber, water structures and signage, the department has decided to prohibit these uses of CCA treated timber in new school structures. To ensure student safety, alternative products will be used, particularly where the timber is accessible to students.

This recommendation is **not** retrospective - there is no requirement at present for any existing structures to be removed.

Schools and P&C Associations should note that the above recommendations from the APVMA apply immediately – both to new works and maintenance activities.

Schools should contact their Facilities Account Manager or Building and Asset Services (BAS) for advice regarding recommended products and maintenance options for existing facilities.

The Department has steered away from the use of this timber for several years and has generally used alternative products such as steel and plastic coated materials.



Safe practices with existing CCA timber structures

The APVMA has not made any recommendations regarding the treatment of existing structures that fall under the category of coming into close contact with persons, particularly children.

Schools should implement safe practices to minimise the level of exposure to CCA treated timber including:

- Basic hygiene practices; including hand washing with soap and drying thoroughly; before eating and after school breaks
- Do not put food in direct contact with treated timber surfaces.

There is anecdotal evidence that suggests the painting of treated timber can reduce possible risks. Some scientific studies indicate that certain penetrating coatings, such as oil-based semi-transparent stains, when used on a regular basis may reduce the potential CCA exposure. Schools looking at applying these coatings should ensure technical advice is received from BAS in the first instance to ensure that appropriate products are used.

Where to from here?

The APVMA will be providing scientific information to agencies such as the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW). The DHPW is responsible for providing technical advice to government including Education Queensland to assist in decision making on this issue.

Further information

- [CCA Treated Timber structures on school sites](#) (available via OnePortal only)

Contacts

- Contact Regional [Senior Health and Safety Consultants](#) for health and safety enquiries.