

Safety Alert

Woodworking prohibitions

2026

The safety of our students and employees is the department's highest priority. This safety alert is issued to prohibit specific woodworking activities in school settings due to the significant risks they pose.

This prohibition applies to all curriculum, non-curriculum and ad hoc activities, including:

- class projects, individual employee or student projects
- extension, 'time-filler' or ad hoc requests or activities
- hobby activities sourced from the internet or interest groups
- fundraising projects e.g. P&C events.

Where this prohibition applies, the activity must not proceed.

1. Prohibition on cutting round or irregularly shaped wood stock

Cutting wooden coasters from tree branches with powered cutting processes (eg. compound saw; bandsaw; circular/table saw) has been identified as an activity used for curriculum projects, non curriculum and ad hoc activities e.g. fundraising events. While this activity may seem innocuous, the risks associated with cutting round wood stock far outweigh any potential benefits.

Cutting round wood stock, such as tree limbs (branches or logs) or cutting round, cylindrical or irregular shaped material with powered cutting processes is prohibited due to the high risk of injury. The round or irregular shape of these materials can cause them to roll or shift unexpectedly during cutting, causing the powered blade to bite and pull the material, along with the operator's hand, into the blade. This can result in serious injuries including lacerations or amputations. The risk increases significantly when multiple slices are cut in succession.

What this means for schools:

- Cutting round or irregularly shaped wood stock on any powered woodworking equipment (e.g. table saws, band saws, drop/compound mitre saws) for any reason is strictly prohibited.
- This prohibition also includes cutting round wood stock on powered equipment even if clamped or stabilised using jigs or fixtures.
- Round or irregularly shaped wood stock may still be worked provided it is cut with hand tools only and appropriate risk assessments have been conducted.

Further information: [Drop/mitre saw](#) safety alert

2. Prohibition on Fractal Burning

Fractal burning, also known as "Lichtenberg burning," is an extremely dangerous practice that involves using high-voltage electricity to create branching or fractal patterns on wood. This activity has resulted in numerous fatalities and severe injuries worldwide, even among experienced users. The risks of electrocution are significant and cannot be mitigated by standard safety measures. The sale or use of this equipment has been prohibited by law in Queensland.

What this means for schools:

- Fractal burning is strictly prohibited in all school settings.
- Do not allow this type of activity for any curriculum, non curriculum or ad hoc activity or project.
- This prohibition includes the use of any homemade or commercially available fractal burning devices.

Further information: [Fractal wood burning](#)

3. Prohibition on the use of Copper Chrome Arsenate timber

Copper Chrome Arsenate (CCA) is one of Australia's most widely used wood preservatives. The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) regulates CCA preservative treatments and has prohibited the use of CCA timber in garden furniture, picnic tables, exterior seating, children's play equipment, patio and domestic decking and handrails due the possibility of CCA leaching from treated timbers and concern about its likely adverse impact on people - particularly children - who are likely to come into frequent and intimate contact.

New CCA timber is identified by a label (End Tag) on each piece of timber or timber bundle with an explicit safety statement 'Treated with copper chrome arsenate'. This material must not be used in ITD, other curriculum or non-curriculum activities or used for other new applications around school sites. Safer alternatives to CCA include:

- Alkaline Copper Quaternary (ACQ) treated timber – use for in/on ground landscaping and outdoor furniture, swings or climbing frames where skin contact occurs and durability is needed.
- Light Organic Solvent Preservative (LOSP) treated timber use for above-ground applications where aesthetics and dimensional stability are important.

Further information about toxic timbers can be found in the [ITD Guidelines](#) and [CCA Timber](#) fact sheet.

What this means for schools:

- Use of CCA treated timber is strictly prohibited.
- Schools may select and use alternative ACQ or LOSP treated timbers relevant to the intended application where required in curriculum activities.

Key actions for school leaders and heads of curriculum

- **Communicate this prohibition alert** to all relevant design and technology and operational staff.
- **Review existing practices** and curriculum/non-curriculum activities in your school to ensure compliance with this safety alert and completion of risk management documentation. Ensure P&C activities are included in the review.
- **Provide appropriate information and training** to staff and students on safe woodworking practices, including the use of guards, clamps, jigs, appropriate timber selection.
- **Complete and maintain relevant approved risk management documentation prior to commencing all activities**

Further information:

- Contact your [Regional Health and Safety Consultant](#) or HSW@ged.qgld.gov.au.