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Scientists Reject Alarmist Media Reports on Pressure-Treated Wood

New York, NY, May 8, 1997 — A panel of scientists today rejected claims made about pressure-treated wood on TV's *Hard Copy*. The report, entitled "Poisons in the Playground," left viewers with the mistaken impression that pressure-treated wood poses health and environmental hazards. On the contrary, says ACSH President Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, "Treated wood offers substantial benefits to consumers and poses no known health hazard. Sound science has demonstrated that when properly processed and appropriately used, this well-tested product is harmless to humans, plants, and non-targeted animals."

While untreated wood generally deteriorates within three to five years, pressure-treated wood is a relatively strong, long-lasting building material that lasts 10 to 20 times longer, thus conserving trees and other resources. Numerous responsible scientific studies support the safety of this convenient, renewable building material that offers significant environmental benefits.

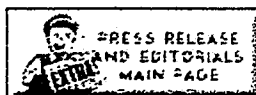
The public has been scared unnecessarily by reports in the media warning of "arsenic-laced lumber." But this misplaced concern about treated wood stems from a failure to distinguish between wood that has been treated with the preservative chromated copper arsenate, or CCA (the preservative used most commonly in places where there is likely to be human contact with the wood) and the CCA itself. In solution CCA is a potentially hazardous material. But CCA-treated wood is not classified as hazardous, because in the pressure-treatment process the CCA "fixes" to the wood in a way that makes the chemical highly insoluble and leach resistant.

In 1985, after an extensive, eight-year investigation, the EPA concluded that there was no evidence of cancer risk or other toxic effects in persons handling CCA-treated wood. The EPA also concluded that the benefits of CCA-treated wood far outweighed any risks.

In the years since the EPA review, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and others have published studies addressing people's concerns over CCA-treated wood, particularly with respect to the exposure of children using wooden playground

structures and the possible contamination of fruits and vegetables grown in areas fenced with treated wood. The studies all concluded that CCA-treated wood is safe—as did a May 1995 article in *Consumer Reports* magazine.

According to Dr. Whelan, "CCA treated wood is a tested product offering minimal risks and substantial benefits. Sound scientific research attests to its safety. Its many advantages should not be overshadowed by ill-conceived, unfounded scare tactics."



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