

Provincial Treated Wood Disposal Ban

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What is treated wood?

Treated wood is wood that is chemically treated during manufacturing so that it will resist decay. During a factory treatment process, creosote, pentachlorophenol, or other chemical preservatives are injected into the wood. Treated wood does not include wood treated at home, like stained or painted wood.

Where is treated wood used in construction/demolition?

Treated wood is commonly used outside for things like telephone poles, railway ties, wharves, fences, decks, and retaining walls.

Is treated wood safe to use?

Treated wood is safe to use in outside construction applications. It is designed to keep the preservatives in the wood while it is in use.

New treated wood contains tags that identify the preservative, the amount of preservative retained in the wood, manufacturer, suitability for in ground or above ground applications, and consumer safety information on safe use. Consumer safety information would also be available through the retailer.

Treated wood should be disposed according to the requirements of your jurisdiction.

Why is treated wood banned from disposal at Construction and Demolition (C&D) debris disposal sites?

Treated wood is banned from disposal at C&D sites by the Province of Nova Scotia to help prevent contamination of groundwater and surface water, because:

- Disposal cells can have large volumes of treated wood. A typical deck on a home requires about 1 tonne of treated wood, while a disposal facility can receive 100s of tonnes of treated wood each year.
- Over time, as treated wood decays, the chemicals that are used to preserve the wood can be released.

- Municipal solid waste landfill cells are built to prevent leakage and to detect contaminated water leakage. Contaminated water is collected and is treated before discharge into the environment. C&D debris disposal cells are not built to this same standard.

Does the disposal ban apply to new treated wood only?

No. The disposal ban applies to both new and old treated wood waste from construction or demolition activities.

When does the disposal ban become effective?

Treated wood is banned from disposal at C&D debris disposal cells by the Province of Nova Scotia as specified in the Solid Waste Resource Management Regulations. This is effective July 5, 2023. For the 1st year, C&D debris facility operators will be providing education to residents and commercial haulers on why treated wood has been banned. ***Enforcement of the disposal ban will commence on July 5th, 2024.***

How do you identify treated wood?

New treated wood is tagged to identify the type of preservative that was used to treat the wood.

Creosote timber is usually brown, tan, or black, tarry-coated beams and lumber. It may leak tar when warmed. Creosote timber will often have an oily smell when new or if the wood is cut.

Pressure treated wood is typically green or brown in color and may have small slits where the preservative was injected into the wood during the manufacturing process.

It should be assumed that wood from the construction, renovation, or demolition of wharves, fences, decks and retaining walls, along with old telephone poles and railway ties, is treated wood.

How do I dispose of treated wood?

It is recommended that you keep treated wood separate during a construction, renovation, or demolition project. This makes it easier to manage and may reduce your disposal costs.

If treated wood is in good condition, think about reusing it.

If you have to dispose of treated wood, it's a good idea to check with the disposal facility before you bring it to them. C&D debris disposal sites can still accept treated wood for shipment to landfill. However, they may require you to separate out treated wood from other wood and C&D debris.

Burning of treated wood is not permitted.

Contact your municipality for further information on treated wood disposal options.

What if I have additional questions about treated wood?

If you have additional questions regarding treated wood, please contact WRM@novascotia.ca



Creosote treated wood



Pressure treated wood tags



New treated wood



New treated wood



Treated wood walkway



Treated wood retaining wall