

Burning of treated timber

This notice serves to remind communities not to burn treated timber either in the open-air or in wood burners as to do so will release toxic fumes into the air and pose a health risk to anyone who may breathe contaminated air.

WorkSafe NZ and the Environmental Protection Authority are concerned there is not enough awareness in communities about the dangers of burning treated timbers.

Most residential construction in NZ uses pinus radiate timber, which is perishable fast-growing softwood not naturally resistant to insects and fungi. To enhance its resistance to pests the timber is typically treated with toxic chemicals such as chromated copper arsenic (CCA). CCA has pesticide and anti-fungal properties and NZ is one of the world's biggest users of CCA treated timber products.

It is because of the toxicity of CCA that the burning of treated timbers is banned in NZ.

Inevitably the house construction process results in off-cuts and other unused timber being accumulated and in need of disposal. There is a temptation for the home owner or builders to use this timber as firewood.

Treated timbers can sometimes be identified by stamps or branding into the wood indicating the nature of the treatment. The various treatments leave the timber with a green-coloured tinge. However, it is not always possible to identify treated timber, so as a general rule 'if in doubt throw it out'.

