

BigToys® *quickFacts*: Copper Azol

The facts on why BigToys® uses Copper Azol preservative on our wood based play equipment.

BigToys applauds and encourages the overall discussion on treated wooden playgrounds that is currently ongoing across North America. We feel however, that much of it is based on incorrect information. As a responsible leading manufacturer of wood based play equipment, BigToys would like to help inform interested parties on some of the issues and offer factual answers to aid in their understating of this complex topic.

- **Why treat wood at all?**
 - Like metal, plastic and other materials, most wood is subject to deterioration when exposed to continual soaking or when in contact with the soil.
 - Wood treated with Copper Azol lasts up to five times longer than untreated wood.
 - The longer wood lasts, the fewer trees need to be cut to replace it.
 - Treated wood components ensure the usability of BigToys for many years, helping to protect the investment of our customers and the safety of children.

- **When did BigToys start using Copper Azol?**
 - As of September, 2001 BigToys play equipment has been produced using Copper Azol as the exclusive preservative for treating our wood components. At that time all CCA (chromated copper arsenate) treated material was removed completely from our products.

- **Why did BigToys change to Copper Azol from CCA?**
 - BigToys decision to replace CCA treatment with Copper Azol was based on our commitment to the safety of children who play on our equipment. While we agree with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that there is no inherent risk in CCA treated wood playgrounds we feel that Copper Azol offers a natural solution for wood preservation without diminishing its effectiveness.

- **What is Copper Azol?**
 - Copper, derived from recycled sources, is the principal active ingredient, protecting against termites and fungal decay. Protection against copper-tolerant fungi is provided by an organic azol that is also used to protect many of the foods we eat such as fruit, peanuts and wheat.
 - This copper azol formulation has been registered by the EPA as a safe and acceptable preservative for pressure-treating wood in consumer applications including playgrounds.
 - The EPA classifies CCA as a restricted use pesticide, but Copper Azol preservative is not restricted by the EPA. In addition, there are no special EPA precautions for handling wood treated with Copper Azol as there are with CCA treated wood.
 - Copper Azol, has been used effectively in 20 countries around the world since 1992.
 - WolmanE® is a commercially produced wood treatment made from Copper Azol.

- **What are the benefits of using Copper Azol on BigToys?**
 - Copper Azol renders wood useless as a food source for termites and fungi while keeping the wood attractive, clean and odorless.
 - Copper Azol is now recognized as the most effective and successful alternative to CCA treated wood throughout the world. It is an ideal choice for playground equipment, outdoor furniture, decks, patios, garden and landscape structures.

- **Are there any risks in using Copper Azol?**

- Based on an independent human health risk assessment by Gradient Corporation, a noted environmental and toxicological consulting firm, the highest potential risk from exposure to copper azol-treated wood **was estimated to be 17 times lower than the level that the EPA uses as a safety benchmark**. This comprehensive study of occupational, residential, and playground uses of wood pressure-treated with copper azol preservative has concluded, "no adverse health effects are expected."
- **How do I dispose of wood treated with Copper Azol?**
 - There is no actual on-site wood fabrication in the installation of BigToys play equipment that will result in wood waste such as scraps or sawdust. This eliminates concerns about site clean-up related to wood treated with Copper Azol.
 - In general, Copper Azol treated wood can be disposed of with ordinary trash collection. It should not be burned.
- **A few misconceptions that we would like to correct:**
 - Pressure treated wood is bad...
 - In fact, "pressure treating" refers only to the process of applying a liquid solution to wood within a vacuum, not to the materials that are being applied. This process is regularly used by manufacturers in the wood industry to apply various stains, water repellants, wood treatments and other materials not considered harmful. Pressure treated wood does not always contain CCA.
 - A greenish wood color means it is treated with CCA...
 - The greenish tint found on some treated wood results naturally from the use of copper as a preservative agent to reduce decay from fungi. It does not indicate the presence of CCA since other non-CCA treatments also appear green. Copper is not considered a heavy metal or a health risk.
 - CCA-treated wooden play equipment must be removed from public play areas...
 - Neither the EPA nor the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) has suggested that existing wooden play equipment should be removed from public playgrounds.
 - The EPA suggest that applying certain penetrating coatings, for example, oil-based semitransparent stains, on a regular basis can aid in keeping these structures safe and usable.
 - CCA is transferred by touching wood playground equipment...
 - Unlike CCA treated wood used in most backyard decks, fences and other residential wood products, existing BigToys equipment previously treated with CCA is free of surface residue, eliminating excess exposure to CCA. Specifically, the wood that was used on our equipment underwent a special manufacturing process as required by the CPSC in accordance with the specifications of the American Wood Preservers Association C17 standard.

- Wood playgrounds are illegal...
 - There are currently no known written or pending laws at the Provincial, State or Federal level that prohibit the purchase of wooden play equipment for use on public playgrounds. A pending bill in the U.S. Congress is written to prohibit “the use of arsenic treated wood” in the manufacture of various residential and commercial products including fences, walkways, boat docks, playgrounds, etc.
- Wood playgrounds are not durable or require extra maintenance...
 - All wood play equipment is not equal. Much of the wood equipment built in the last two decades was constructed from typical lumber produced for general construction. BigToys wood components feature highly finished materials, fabricated for use only on BigToys play equipment. The difference results in a BigToys product that lasts many years and requires no more maintenance than equipment made of metal and plastic. We know of BigToys equipment installed 30 years ago that is still being used daily in parks and schools in the U.S.
- **A few resources for you to consider for additional information on Copper Azol and wood treatment in general:**
 - Wolman®E Website:
<http://www.naturalselect.com/index.htm>
 - A Comparison of Alternatives to CCA Treated Wood
<http://www.greenresourcecenter.org/MaterialSheetsWord/AltTreatedWood.pdf>
 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Announcement on CCA Treated Wood:
http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/chemicals/residential_use_cancellation.htm#ten
 - Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Fact Sheet on CCA Treated Wood in Playgrounds:
<http://www.cpsc.gov/phth/ccafact.html>
 - Text of “Arsenic-Treated Residential-Use Wood Prohibition Act”:
<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Search for senate bill: **S 337 IS**