

The Do's and Don'ts of Treated Wood

Have you picked up a utility pole recently from the cooperative and plan to use it in some fashion at your place of residence? They can be quite useful. Yet, while treated wood contains chemical preservatives that lengthen its useful life, these chemicals could also cause adverse health and environmental impacts if not handled properly. Pentachlorophenol (PCP or 'penta') or creosote are two chemicals commonly used for utility poles, although they are being phased out and replaced with less harmful chemicals. Let's learn some more on the "do's and don'ts" of handling treated wood from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.



DO's:

- Use the smallest amount of treated wood necessary.
- If you raise organic crops or livestock, carefully review your certification standards. Treated wood use is heavily restricted by most organic certification standards and agencies.
- Wear gloves when handling treated wood. Wash hands and exposed areas thoroughly before eating, drinking, using the bathroom, or using tobacco products after handling treated wood.
- Wear a properly fitted dust mask and eye protection when cutting, drilling, and sanding treated wood.
- Launder clothing worn when handling treated wood separately from other laundry.
- Contain and collect all dust, particles, and debris from treated wood. When disposing of this waste, follow the guidance below.

DON'Ts:

- Do not use any type of treated wood for applications in which the wood will come into direct or indirect contact with drinking water supplies. Incidental contact is acceptable. An example of incidental contact is in docks or bridges, where treated wood is used for decking and not pilings. Less toxic alternatives exist for many of these uses; choose them whenever possible.
- Do not use any type of treated wood where the wood will come into contact with human or animal food or with beehives. Examples of uses to avoid include cutting boards, countertops, animal bedding, feed bunks, and mulch.
- Do not use CCA-, PCP-, or creosote-treated wood for residential use, for playground equipment, or in any use in which it may come into contact with domestic animal or livestock drinking water.
- Do not dispose of treated wood at a demolition landfill in Minnesota, even if evaluation shows it to be nonhazardous. Rather, segregate treated wood from other demolition debris and dispose of it at a permitted, lined, industrial or mixed solid waste landfill.
- Do not chip, grind, burn, or bury treated wood for disposal.