



Wood Protection Association

Top tips on buying preservative treated wood

It's a mistake to assume that all pressure treated wood is the same. Whilst one piece of treated wood may look very much like any other the level of preservative protection could be very different.

That's because the British Standard for wood preservation, BS8417, requires that the level of preservative impregnated into the wood is tailored precisely to the end use and service life desired. An outdoor deck or fence post in ground contact for example will contain higher levels of preservative than an internal floor joist. The level of treatment reflects the risk of wetting and the onset of decay in service. Use a joist treated for an indoor application as a garden deck joist and premature failure is almost inevitable.

Where will the treated wood be used?

BS8417 groups the applications for treated wood into four 'Use Classes.' Use class 1 is for internal applications where there is low risk of wetting. Use class 2 for internal applications such as roof timbers where the wood may be exposed to wetting, condensation or damp over its service life. Use class 3 relates to wood exposed to the weather but not in direct soil contact whilst use class 4 applications are for wood used in permanent contact with the ground or fresh water.

What service life is required?

BS8417 further tailors the level of treatment by service life. Three desired service life choices are available - 15, 30 and 60 years. For internal construction timber 60 years is the norm. For external applications like fencing and decking 15 years is the default treatment with longer desired service life components e.g. 30 years fence posts usually treated to order.

If in doubt, ask the independent experts at the WPA
For guidance info@wood-protection.org

Treated wood buyers check-list

1. Establish the application use class of the component(s) you need before ordering.
2. Tell your supplier, in writing, that the wood must be treated to comply with BS8417 for this use class.
3. Specify the desired service life you require for the wood - 15, 30 or 60 years.
4. Incising (piercing the surface of a component) is used increasingly to enhance preservative penetration. Expect to see it on sawn posts treated for the 30-years specification in BS8417.
5. Ask your supplier to verify (on the delivery note and invoice) or provide a treatment certificate that the wood supplied meets your specification.
6. When buying from stock always verify which use class and desired service life the wood has been treated for.
7. Never substitute wood treated for an indoor application for an external application – failure is inevitable.
8. For wood in permanent ground contact Use Class 4 levels of protection must be achieved. Anything less and service life, structural safety and customer satisfaction will be compromised.
9. Always use end grain preservative for sealing untreated wood exposed when cross cutting, notching or boring treated products during installation.
10. When third-party reassurance of fitness for purpose is required ask for treated wood certificated under the WPA Benchmark quality scheme which verifies compliance with BS8417
For sources click:

<http://www.wood-protection.org/quality-assurance/>