Preservative treatment provides wood with added durability. However, 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 – BS 8417, requires that the loading and penetration of preservative, impregnated into the wood, is tailored to the desired end use.

BS 8417 groups the applications for treated wood into ‘Use Classes’, the main three being:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BS 8417 USE CLASS</th>
<th>SERVICE SITUATION</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **2**             | Above ground, covered *e.g. by a roof.* Occasional risk of wetting. | All *internal* construction timbers within the building envelope, such as:  
• Tiling battens, framing timbers, Internal joists, sole plates, roof timbers |
| **3(u)**          | Above ground, exterior *uncoated* Exposed to frequent wetting. | All *external* construction timbers above ground, such as:  
• Deck boards and joists - not in ground contact  
• Fence rails and boards  
• Cladding and fascias |
| **4**             | In ground contact or fresh water. Permanently exposed to wetting. | All *external* construction timbers in ground contact, such as:  
• Fencing, fence posts, agricultural timbers, retaining walls  
• Playground equipment  
• Decking posts, joists and timbers in ground contact |
The Buyer’s Guide to Preservative Treated Wood

Which treated wood should I purchase?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Class</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interior use only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3u</td>
<td>Exterior use, above ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ground contact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check List
Buying and Using Preservative Treated Wood

- Establish the Use Class of the timber you need, before ordering.
- Tell your supplier in writing, that the wood must be treated to that particular Use Class to comply with BS 8417.
- Ask your supplier to verify that the wood supplied meets your Use Class specification – on the delivery note and invoice or a treatment certificate.
- When buying from stock always check which Use Class the wood has been treated to.
- NEVER substitute wood that has been treated for an indoor application for use in an external application – failure is inevitable.
- 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.
- When cross cutting, notching or boring treated timber products during installation, ALWAYS apply an end grain preservative treatment to freshly exposed areas – to maintain the integrity of the protection. NEVER put cut ends in the ground, even if end grain coated.

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