

The Guide To



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Playgrounds and Arsenic Wood

New York State Law now regulates the use of Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA) treated wood, also known as pressure treated wood, in school and public playgrounds. This guide offers some facts about CCA treated lumber, the New York State Law, and resources for further information.

New York State Law on CCA

Section 37-0109 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law makes it illegal for schools and public playgrounds to construct playground equipment from pressure treated lumber that contains Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA). A major component of CCA is Arsenic, which is known to cause cancer.

The law also requires:

- That existing CCA-treated lumber on playgrounds be sealed (with paint or another finish) to stop CCA from leaching or escaping from the wood, and to cover the ground to protect children from arsenic that may have leached into the soil.
- The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to publish information on the dangers and hazards to public health and the environment on the use of CCA pressure treated lumber.
- The DEC to compile and publish a list of less toxic materials that may be used on playgrounds as an alternative to the use of CCA treated lumber.
- The DEC to compile and publish information on non-toxic methods and materials that are available to seal playground structures constructed with CCA wood and to cover the ground.

Children's Health and the Environment

The environment uniquely affects children's health. Children are very vulnerable to environmental contaminants and hazards because their bodies are still developing. They proportionately eat, drink and breathe much more per pound of body weight than adults; they are exposed to more environmental threats, especially young children who spend more time close or near to the ground (or possibly contaminated playground equipment) and often bring their hands to their mouths. Children are also less able to protect themselves from environmental hazards.

Poison Wood



Health Concerns with CCA

Arsenic, one of the main components of CCA is a known carcinogen. Recent studies demonstrate that CCA continues to leach from CCA lumber for years after it has been installed. This leaching material then gets on children's hands and clothing and, because of young children's tendency to frequently put their hands to their mouths, can then be ingested by the child. CCA may also leach from the playground wood into the ground, turning the soil around the playground into another source of contamination. Children should be discouraged from playing on CCA pressure treated lumber playgrounds unless it has been appropriately treated and sealed. Children who have played on a playground with CCA wood should wash their hands thoroughly afterwards. The child should soon bathe and his or her clothing should soon be washed.

What to Do

If your child's playground is made of wood, you need to determine if it is Pressure-treated with CCA. Unfortunately, this can be difficult to the untrained eye. Many wood playgrounds are made with cedar or other rot-resistant wood that is not harmful. If the wood has a greenish tint, it is suspect. If you are unsure, you can order a test kit (see the Environmental Working Group in the *Resources* section). If you know that your child's playground is made of CCA wood, you need to take action. Take this guide to the school principal or to the public playground's administrator and insist that the CCA wood be replaced or treated in accordance with the law. If you are not satisfied after a reasonable period of time that appropriate action is being taken, then you need to contact your local office of the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Sources of Additional Information

There are a number of sources of information about CCA lumber and playgrounds on the internet. Some of this information may be found at the following sites:

- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has a brief fact sheet on CCA and lumber:
<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dshh/sldwaste/cca.htm>
- The NYS Law banning CCA wood for playgrounds can be viewed at:
<http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?cl=37&a=152>
- The US EPA has a question and answer page on CCA:
http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/cca_qa.htm
- For a copy of the NYS Department of Education's letter to School District personnel regarding the NYS Law:
http://unix32.nysed.gov:9210/facplan/Laws&Regs/CCA_letter_2002.html
- Beyond Pesticides, an advocacy organization, has good information regarding CCA and other pesticides:
<http://www.beyondpesticides.org/main.html> (click on "Info Services", then "Pesticide Fact Sheets", then "CCA")
- The Environmental Working Group has information and links on CCA wood and also sells CCA test kits:
<http://www.ewg.org/issues/home.php?i=7>
- An advocacy group in Canada has a CCA informational site that is full of CCA lumber information and links:
<http://www.noccawood.ca/>

