

CITW Facts by Fax

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OTTAWA AIMING TO REDUCE PESTICIDES FOR COSMETIC USES

Pesticides used to keep lawns green, maintain golf courses and beautify parks should be phased out over five years, says the House of Commons Environment Committee.

The 31-year old Pest Control Products Act should be updated to prohibit the registration and re-registration of pesticides intended for cosmetic uses, says the committee in a 200-page recently published report. The committee also urged a re-evaluation (according to today's standards) of all pesticides approved before 1995 and a ban on pesticides where safer alternatives exist.

Health Minister Allan Rock has new draft legislation for pesticide use but he has not yet tabled it in the Commons. It is not clear whether any or all of the recommendations will be adopted.

Industry officials joined the Canadian Alliance in denouncing the committee's report as "unbalanced and based more on hysteria than on sound science."

The proposals come on the heel of a controversial move by the city of Halifax when it became the first North American city to ban home gardeners from spraying pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. Industry officials have fought the ban, claiming Ottawa should regulate chemicals. Two small towns in Quebec adopted similar bans but they are being challenged on constitutional grounds.

NEW INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR WOOD PROTECTION IN THE WORKS

A new international framework for wood preservation is in the midst of being

drafted by the International Standards Organization's technical subcommittee ISOTC165SC1. The committee met in San Francisco on May 10 and 11 to pursue discussions over the development on an international standard for wood preservation. An international body, the subcommittee is represented by members from Australia, Canada, England, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden and the U.S. The committee's secretariat is the CITW.

According to the agreement reached in San Francisco the framework now being developed will lay the foundation for countries to develop their own hazard class wood preservation standards. Five classes have been identified with various subclasses.

The subcommittee, however, also agreed that it was best not to address the issue of standardized testing. In North America treated wood is tested in service or in field trials. In Europe treated wood is tested in laboratories under accelerated conditions. And therein lies the conundrum, with neither able to come to terms as to which testing conditions are more effective. "It was felt that at this time at least it was not necessary to come to an agreement over testing methods for preservatives," notes Henry Walthert, Secretary.

Though the ISO subcommittee will meet again next spring, much work is expected to be conducted over the course of the year. It is expected that an international framework for wood preservation will be completed within two years.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH GROUP

Researchers and scientists from around the world gathered in beautiful Kona, Hawaii

from May 14 to May 18 for the annual meeting of the International Research Group. Over 170 papers were presented, providing a glimpse on research activities on wood preservation from an environmental, social and political perspective.

Paul Cooper, a professor of forestry at the University of Toronto, presented four studies. The first one dealt with a fixation process model. Using this model, one can predict whether fixation will be completed or predict how far it has progressed in a given time by monitoring the temperature of wood after treatment.

Another study examined the effect of organic swampy water on CCA leaching from poles. Though it was suspected that organic acid under these circumstances would cause high leaching, the results from the study revealed that it was not as high as expected. "That's important because any loss of preservatives in the field contributes to potential environmental problems plus a loss of effectiveness of the treatment. And we just didn't know how poles would stand up in that kind of environment -- and they stand up very well," says Cooper.

Cooper's third study looked at recycling CCA treated wood into wood cement products. It turns out that wood cement is a "very positive approach" because treated wood provides a stronger product with better properties than untreated wood.

His final study examined residual CCA of poles taken out of service. Preservatives in poles that were up to 50 years in service were analysed above ground and below ground in order to determine whether they could be reused without treatment. "In all cases we found there was still enough preservatives that you would not need to treat them," says Cooper.

AMERICAN WOOD PRESERVERS ASSOCIATION

The annual meeting of the American Wood Preservers Association was a success. Held in San Francisco from May 7 to May 10, the annual meeting drew over 400 people including many Canadians.

Many interesting sessions were presented including "Marketing Opportunities for 2000 & Beyond," "Utility Concerns for 2000 & Beyond," "Overlooked Plant Maintenance Opportunities," and "Railroad Cross Ties Usage Beyond 2000." As well, there were a series of short presentations on current wood preservation research activities being conducted around the world. The Colley/Hartford International Symposium showcased presentations by scientists from England, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, and the U.S. The highlight was a presentation made by Paul Morris of Forintek Canada. His presentation was entitled "Integrated Control of Subterranean Termites: The Six S Approach."

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT & DUE DILIGENCE

Companies handling toxic materials must at the very least meet industry standards, otherwise risk facing the wrath of the courts and be held legally responsible for damages. This is why due diligence is critical, according to John Willms of the environmental law firm Willms & Shir.

A legal principle that has been used successfully to defend against environmental charges, a successful defence of due diligence entails proving that the person charged took reasonable precautions before the event occurred. The courts, however, have sent strong signals that industries handling toxic materials are subject to a higher standard of diligence than other sectors.

To ensure a company is seen to be acting at or above the standard of due diligence, Willms strongly recommends the following:

- Companies should develop and implement an environmental management policy and system. Based on the ISO 14000 model, an environmental management system should include an environmental policy;

planning, implementation and operation; examination and corrective action; management review; and compliance with local laws and regulations.

- Documentation is critical as it may be introduced as evidence in court. Without consistent and clear documentation, due diligence is difficult to prove, points out Willms.
- Training of employees and management is another vital element.
- A hands-on approach by management is essential, particularly since the courts expect management to be "active and aware" of environmental and health and safety issues. Two directors with Bata were convicted because they failed to take an active role in dealing with disposal of waste that was causing pollution. Spot checks should be conducted.
- Contingency planning for emergencies is a must as is communication with regulators.

UPDATE ON THE GREAT LAKES BINATIONAL TOXICS STRATEGY

A stakeholder forum sponsored by Environment Canada and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was held on May 16 in Toronto to discuss progress over the joint U.S.-Canada endeavour. It was decided that the Great Lakes Binational toxics program was going to wait until the SOP and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency reevaluated Level II Substances such as penta before taking any action. A decision will be rendered by November 2001.

TREX COMPANY HONOURED

Trex Company LLC, North America's largest manufacturer of wood/plastic composite decking products, was honoured at the Annual Connecticut College Award Ceremony for its ability to combine environmental stewardship with jobs, productivity and profits. The U.S. company received the "Inherit the Earth Award" gold medal for manufacturing environmentally-responsible alternative deck lumber.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

American Wood Preservers Association Technical Committee Meetings

Hilton Hotel
Salt Lake City, Utah
September 17-22, 2000

Canadian Institute of Treated Wood Committee Meetings

Hilton Toronto Airport
Toronto, Ontario
September 18, 2000

Wood Solutions Fair

Radisson Suites Toronto Airport
Toronto, Ontario
September 26

Canadian Wood Council Fall Meeting

Calgary, Alberta
October 19-20, 2000

Canadian Wood Preservers Association Fall Meeting

Montreal, Quebec
October 23-24, 2000

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