

News from CPSC

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Office of Information and Public Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20207

For Immediate Release
November 4, 2003
Release # 04-026

CPSC Media Contacts:
Eric Criss, (301) 504-7783
Ken Giles, (301) 504-7052

CPSC Denies Petition to Ban CCA Pressure-Treated Wood Playground Equipment

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) voted unanimously today to deny a petition to ban the use of chromated copper arsenate (CCA) pressure-treated wood in playground equipment. CCA manufacturers and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had previously agreed to phase out CCA treatment of wood for most consumer uses by the end of 2003.

CPSC Chairman Hal Stratton said, “The industry has already agreed to stop using this chemical as a treatment for wood for most residential consumer uses. The EPA action effectively addresses the petitioners’ request.”

Commissioner Mary Sheila Gall said, “EPA’s cancellation of the registration of CCA as a pesticide will have the effect of prospectively banning the use of CCA-treated wood, and most major manufacturers of playground sets have already ceased using CCA-treated wood. I urge the staff to continue its work to identify stains and sealants that will reduce exposure to arsenic from existing CCA wood structures.”

Commissioner Thomas Moore said, “While EPA’s action will address the issue of a ban on the use of CCA-treated wood, I recommend that the staff continue efforts to identify stains and sealants. We need to educate the public about the cancer risk associated with these structures and steps to minimize the risk.”

Statements by the Commissioners are available at www.cpsc.gov

In a report submitted to CPSC Commissioners earlier this year, staff scientists found that some children may face an increased risk of developing lung or bladder cancer over their lifetime from playing on playground equipment made from CCA pressure-treated wood. This risk is in addition to the risk of getting cancer due to other factors over one’s lifetime. Not every exposed individual will get cancer at sometime during his/her lifetime.

CPSC staff states this increased risk to children is primarily due to exposure to arsenic residue on children’s hands followed by hand-to-mouth contact. Transfer of the arsenic from the

-more-

hand to the mouth can occur during and after playing on CCA pressure-treated wood playground equipment.

An individual child's risk from arsenic in CCA-treated playground equipment will vary depending on many factors. Those include the amount of arsenic released from the CCA-treated wood, the amount of arsenic picked up on the hands, the number of days and years the child plays on the wood, and the amount of arsenic transferred to the mouth by hand-to-mouth activity. The staff considered these types of exposures in calculating the increased lifetime risk of developing lung or bladder cancer. There are many other risk factors that contribute to a person's risk for developing cancer over their lifetime such as environment, genetics, diet, and behaviors such as smoking.

To minimize the risk of exposure to arsenic from CCA-treated playground equipment, the CPSC staff recommends that parents and caregivers thoroughly wash children's hands with soap and water immediately after playing on CCA pressure-treated wood playground equipment. In addition, the staff recommends that children not eat while on CCA-treated wood playground equipment.

CPSC and EPA are conducting studies of coatings and sealants to determine effective measures of reducing the amount of arsenic released from CCA-treated wood. Results are expected in the next year.

Arsenic occurs naturally in the air, soil, water, and in some foods. While exposure to arsenic from background sources could be much higher than the exposure from playgrounds for some children, exposure to arsenic from CCA-treated playgrounds could be a significant source of arsenic for other children on those days that include a playground visit.

Most major manufacturers of commercial and residential wood playground equipment have already stopped using CCA-treated wood to make their products. In addition, playground structures can be made of other materials that don't contain arsenic, such as naturally rot-resistant wood (redwood and cedar), metal, plastic, composite materials, and wood treated with substitute chemicals. All of these materials could be used for new construction.

Consumers may obtain a fact sheet on the findings of the Commission staff at the CPSC web site at www.cpsc.gov or by calling the CPSC hotline at 800-638-CPSC (2772).

###