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WHITMAN ANNOUNCES TRANSITION FROM CONSUMER USE OF TREATED WOOD CONTAINING ARSENIC

Contact: Dave Ryan, 202-564-7827

EPA Administrator Christie Whitman today announced a voluntary decision by industry to move consumer use of treated lumber products away from a variety of pressure-treated wood that contains arsenic by Dec. 31, 2003, in favor of new alternative wood preservatives. This transition affects virtually all residential uses of wood treated with chromated copper arsenate, also known as CCA, including wood used in play-structures, decks, picnic tables, landscaping timbers, residential fencing, patios and walkways/boardwalks. By Jan. 2004, EPA will not allow CCA products for any of these residential uses.

"This action will result in a reduction of virtually all residential uses of CCA-treated wood within less than two years," said EPA Administrator Christie Whitman. "Today's announcement greatly accelerates the transition to new

alternatives, responding to market place demands for wood products that do not contain CCA. This transition will substantially reduce the time it could have taken to go through the traditional regulatory process."

"This is a responsible action by the industry," Whitman continued. "Today's action will ensure that future exposures to arsenic are minimized in residential settings. The companies deserve credit for coming forward in a voluntary way to undergo a conversion and retooling of their plants as quickly as possible. The transition to new alternatives will provide consumers with greater choice for their building needs."

The transition period will provide consumers with increasingly more non-CCA treated wood alternatives as the industry undergoes conversion and retooling of their industrial equipment and practices, while also allowing adequate time to convert treatment plants with minimal economic disruption for the industry's employees. Beginning immediately, and over the next 22 months, wood treatment plants will convert to new alternative wood preservatives that do not contain arsenic. In the current year, manufacturers expect a decline in production of CCA products for affected residential uses up to 25 percent, with a corresponding shift to alternatives. During 2003, the companies expect the transition away from CCA to continue and increase, with a decline in production of CCA products for affected residential uses up to 70 percent, with a corresponding shift to alternatives. New labeling will be required on all CCA products, specifying that no use of CCA will be allowed by the wood-treating industry for the affected residential uses after Dec. 31, 2003.

EPA has not concluded that CCA-treated wood poses unreasonable risks to the public for existing CCA-treated wood being used around or near their homes or from wood that remains available in stores. EPA does not believe there is any reason to remove or replace CCA-treated structures, including decks or playground equipment. EPA is not recommending that existing structures or surrounding soils be removed or replaced. While available data are very limited, some studies suggest that applying certain penetrating coatings (e.g., oil-based semi-transparent stains) on a regular basis (one re-application per year or every other year depending upon wear and weathering) may reduce the migration of wood preservative chemicals from CCA-treated wood.

Arsenic is a known human carcinogen and, thus, the Agency believes that any reduction in the levels of potential exposure to arsenic is desirable. As always, when children play outside, whether around CCA-treated play structures or not, they should wash their hands prior to eating. Also, food should not be placed directly on any outside surface, including treated wood. CCA-treated wood

should never be burned, as toxic chemicals may be released as part of the smoke and ashes. Consumers who work with CCA-treated wood are encouraged to use common sense in order to reduce any potential exposure to chemicals in the wood. Specific actions include sawing, sanding and machining CCA-treated wood outdoors, and wearing a dust mask, goggles and gloves when performing this type of activity. Clean up all sawdust, scraps and other construction debris thoroughly and dispose of it in the trash (i.e., municipal solid waste). Do not compost or mulch sawdust or remnants from CCA-treated wood. Those working with the wood should wash all exposed areas of their bodies thoroughly with soap and water before eating, drinking or using tobacco products. Work clothes should be washed separately from other household clothing before wearing them again.

Chromated copper arsenate, or CCA, is a chemical compound mixture containing inorganic arsenic, copper and chromium that has been used for wood preservative uses since the 1940s. CCA is injected into wood by a process that uses high pressure to saturate wood products with the chemicals. CCA is intended to protect wood from dry rot, fungi, molds, termites, and other pests that can threaten the integrity of wood products.

During the past several months, CCA-treated wood has been the subject of an EPA evaluation under provisions of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, which direct EPA to periodically reevaluate older pesticides to ensure that they meet current safety standards. The Agency is continuing to proceed with a risk assessment. EPA is also continuing to evaluate public comments and input from an external scientific review panel on methodologies to perform a risk assessment for residential settings and potential exposure to children from CCA.

More information on this announcement is available at www.epa.gov/pesticides/citizens/1file.htm.

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