



How to buy treated wood that's fit for purpose

All builders know about treated wood. It's green; it's protected against wood decay and insects; it can be used almost anywhere. This is true. However, whilst wood may look treated, how sure can you be that it will be fit for the use intended? There is a way of making sure. British Standards require that treated wood is given a level of protection that matches its end use. For example, an outdoor deck or fencing component will contain higher levels of preservative than an internal floor or roof joist. BS8417 is the British Standard for treated wood. In this standard, construction timber is grouped into four use classes. If treated wood is to deliver the performance you require – 15, 30 or 60 years, follow the "golden rules" in our buyers guide below:

Treated wood buyers guide

1. Always identify the Use Class before ordering.
2. Specify that treatment must be in accordance with BS8417 for this Use Class.
3. Specify the desired service life – 15, 30 and 60 years are the options in BS8417.
4. Ask your supplier to verify, in writing, that your wood has been treated to the specification you require i.e. on the delivery note and invoice or as a separate treatment certificate.
5. When buying treated wood from stock always get the supplier to verify, in writing which Use Class it is suitable for.
6. Never substitute wood treated for an indoor Use Class for an external Use Class – failure is inevitable.

Always make sure the level of preservative treatment is tailored to the end use of the component.

7. Use Class 4 is the level of treatment required for components in direct ground contact. Anything less and service life, structural safety and customer satisfaction will be compromised.
8. If third-party reassurance of fitness for purpose is required ask for components certificated under the WPA Benchmark quality assurance scheme.
9. Always buy a can of end grain sealer compatible with the treatment preservative for re-treating wood that is cross cut, notched or bored during installation.

Treated wood Use Class categories

Use Class 1	Internal timbers – low risk of wetting Floor joists and glulam beams
Use Class 2	Internal timbers – intermittent risk of wetting Roofing timbers
Use Class 3C	Outdoor wood above ground – coated Window frames, doors, external cladding
Use Class 3UC	Outdoor wood above ground – uncoated Deck boards and joists, balustrades and fence rails
Use Class 4	Outdoor wood in ground and freshwater contact Fence posts, deck posts and joists, sleepers, pergola posts, bridge and board walk support, earth retaining walls.

Source: BS8417:2011



WPA Benchmark – the quality scheme that gets right to the heart of treated wood fitness for purpose. **WPA Benchmark** provides independent reassurance that timber has been treated correctly for its end-use to deliver a service life in line with BS8417. Operated by the Wood Protection Association, the UK authority on wood preservation, **WPA Benchmark** has the credibility and relevance essential to build buyer confidence in treated wood performance.

For sources of treated wood products with the **WPA Benchmark** of quality e-mail: info@wood-protection.org
Visit: www.wood-protection.org



Want more detailed information

For more detailed specification guidance about treatment and the different types of preservatives available the Wood Protection Association publishes a Manual of Industrial Wood Preservation – Specification & Practice.

E-mail info@wood-protection.org for details.

About the WPA

The Wood Protection Association (WPA) is a not for profit technical and advisory body interested in the development and promotion of timber protection technology to support the use of wood as a cost effective, sustainable construction material.

