

AMERICAN WOOD PROTECTION ASSOCIATION: WHAT WE CAN DO FOR YOU

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Summary

The primary mission of the American Wood Protection Association is the establishment of standards for wood protection through an open consensus based process. The association continues to work diligently at ensuring its process for creating and maintaining these peer reviewed standards is efficient. Many important improvements to this process have been developed and implemented during the last several years and the organization is well positioned for continuing its mission.

1. Introduction

The American Wood Protection Association (“AWPA”, formerly American Wood-Preservers’ Association) has evolved during its 100-plus year history. The current association is forward looking, efficient in its operation and committed to continuously improving its process for creating and maintaining standards. What follows is an individual AWPA member’s attempt to answer the question posed by the Canadian Wood Preserving Association: What can AWPA do for you? I emphasize that this is an individual’s viewpoint, and not an official position of the AWPA and will attempt to reveal the authors personal biases on the subject as much as possible. I am an Honorary Member of AWPA due to prior service as AWPA President (2004/2005) and currently am an active member of the Treatments Committee of AWPA. The company I work for is a “treater”, a fact relevant to my bias. In addition to its standard writing work, AWPA also serves as a forum for the exchange of information regarding wood protection primarily through its annual meetings. While I touch briefly on this aspect of AWPA, this paper will focus on its work creating and maintaining standards.

2. Discussion

Each year, AWPA publishes its Book of Standards. This publication, available either as CD-ROM or hardcopy, encompasses the most current version of the AWPA standards resulting from the previous year’s standard setting work. AWPA currently uses two standard setting cycles. The centerpieces of these cycles are the technical committee meetings which occur each spring (in conjunction with the AWPA Annual Meeting) and fall. Traditionally, the fall technical committee meetings have been the focus of this

work but AWPA created the opportunity for the spring cycle which has been well received and is likely to grow in its importance. Each cycle begins with the submission of proposals to the AWPA Technical Committees at least 45 days prior to the meetings and concludes with a procedural review by the AWPA Executive Committee.

AWPA provides an opportunity to any individual interested in wood protection to participate in the standard setting process by applying for appointment to one or more of the AWPA Technical Committees. AWPA membership is on an individual basis. (AWPA has been successful in having only minimal dues increases over the last couple decades by finding other means of fighting the ever-increasing costs of running a meaningful and successful association.) Participation in the AWPA Technical Committees is the real answer to the question, "What can AWPA do for you?" The value of participation in this open process is made all the more clear by the recent realization that it is possible to bring a pressure treated product to market without AWPA listing; there are other paths to market. While I do not wish to suggest that the other means of standardizing products lack integrity, they are closed processes. Because they are closed processes, they do not offer the numerous benefits which come to the industry as a whole from an open, peer reviewed process such as AWPA.

Only AWPA maintains an open forum that allows for full discussion of a new wood protection system. Two excellent examples stem from the most recent AWPA Technical Committee meetings held in Boise, Idaho September, 2007. A method for listing barrier protection systems has been hammered out. Although there was no direct fit for these products in the AWPA standards, through the hard work of an interested proponent and several task force members, a fair and workable system has been established. The culmination of which is a set of proposals currently moving through the standardization cycle. A second example was the consideration of a new preservative system known as PTI (Propiconazole Tebuconazole Imidicloprid). The proponents used a new mechanism for evaluation of the preservative data packet called the Preservative Review Board. This proposal also pushed the Technical Committees to consider a number of new concepts. Again, these proposals are currently moving through the cycle and should be complete by January 2007.

AWPA is an organization run by its membership: users, producers and general interest members (such as wood scientists from universities and government laboratories). Its ability and commitment to react to the changing needs of the industry have been demonstrated repeatedly over the last five years. The creation of the Preservative Review Board, the addition of a spring standardization cycle and the shortening/simplification of the standardization process are important examples. That commitment continues today.

Participation in its Technical Committees allows individuals to gain a deeper understanding of wood protection systems, both new and old, than would otherwise be possible. It allows them to have a voice in the creation of the standards that define the industry. If a first hand understanding of developments in this quickly changing industry has value, then this is what AWPA can do for you.

I would be remiss if I did not mention two other aspects of AWPA which provide value for its members and the wood protection industry. AWPA's Annual Meeting provides a forum for presentation of both technical and non-technical papers in the field of wood protection. It is one of the largest gatherings of people interested in the field. With the far reaching changes which have happened in the consumer products markets served by the industry and the resulting increase in research and development of new wood protection systems, the information exchanged during the annual meeting is more valuable than ever. Finally, AWPA created a means for companies to show their support of the association. The Organizational Sponsorship program, begun in 2004, has been well received. Organizational Sponsors are recognized in several ways including a plaque for the highest categories of sponsorship and listing on the AWPA website.

3. Conclusion

AWPA offers an opportunity for individuals interested in the field of wood protection to participate in the development of peer reviewed, consensus based standards for the industry. The process used by AWPA is inherently more reliable than any closed process benefiting as it does from the full consideration of the experts in the field. Other processes, while not lacking in integrity, simply cannot match the AWPA standards. Companies and institutions which support their employee's participation in AWPA Technical Committees are rewarded with first hand understanding of a quickly evolving industry.

To learn more, visit the AWPA website listed below.

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