

CWPA Opening Address

Bienvenue au Montreal a Madames et Messieurs and welcome to the 30th anniversary meeting of the Canadian Wood Preservers Association. It is a great honor and a privilege to be the President of this association to help commemorate this important milestone in our organization. It's also nice to see such a good turnout for this meeting, especially in light of the current economic conditions. In the next two days, our association has arranged a number of interesting and informative presentations for you on the latest topics relevant to our industry.

Over the years there have been many changes in the wood preservation industry, and as the French say, “**plus ca change, plus ce la meme chose**”. There is no doubt that more changes will be coming in the future. However, regardless of the preservative, the use of wood preservatives has always offered excellent performance and value to the end user. In the early days, wood preservatives like creosote and pentachlorophenol were the primary heavy-duty wood preservatives used, mostly for industrial uses, and they are still being used today. This is a testament to their effectiveness and longevity. Even today, treated wood used in these applications is the “backbone” of the utility and railway infrastructure in Canada and the United States.

Shortly after WWII waterborne preservative systems like CCA and ACA began to be used for the treatment of utility poles and other industrial products. However, it wasn't until sometime in the early 1970's that CCA began to be used for outdoor residential use. The use of CCA pressure treated wood grew substantially for the next two decades to the point where CCA was the primary wood preservative used for consumer products and had expanded into the industrial commercial market as well, mainly for utility pole use. CCA was an extremely popular preservative and it was used around the world for over 25 years without incident. Unfortunately, the use of CCA pressure treated wood for the residential market was cut short in 2003 by the voluntary withdrawal from this market followed by the introduction of the “second generation” waterborne preservatives, ACQ-C and CA-B. I say unfortunately because CCA was probably the best preservative system ever developed, in terms of ease of use, efficacy, environmental impact, and value. Even so, some people (not myself) will remember that CCA went through a number

of formulation changes since its initial introduction until the most desirable formulation prevailed, that being CCA Type C. However, these changes or improvements to the formulation were made over a significant period of time.

In the last 5 years, the use of 2nd generation water borne preservatives has almost totally replaced CCA in the residential market and is now in the process of expanding slowly into some traditional heavy duty uses. Today, CCA is used primarily for the utility poles, agricultural posts, wood foundation, and plywood. The two most prominent CCA replacement preservatives, ACQ and CA-B have also gone through a number of changes and improvements since their initial introduction and widespread use due to a number of different reasons, which I won't elaborate on. Although these preservative systems have performed well and have been continuously refined and improved, the US and other parts of the world have already seen the introduction of new "3rd Generation" preservative systems that offer additional benefits for the producer and end user. It is very likely that these 3rd generation systems may sometime in the not too distant future also be replaced by 4th generation systems, whatever they may be.

By now you can see a trend is happening, that is the rate at which new wood preservatives are being developed seems to be accelerating. In the United States and other parts of the world, the rate of introduction of new wood preservatives has been much faster than in Canada mainly because of differences in the requirements for pesticide registration. In the US for example, it is possible to register a new preservative in about 6 months, whereas it takes considerably longer in Canada. In the US the building code approval process is also much faster and there are more alternatives for obtaining code equivalences. This means that preservatives can be tested and brought to market faster in the US and other parts of the world than in Canada. This can be viewed as good or bad depending on what side of the fence you are on. Still, the Americans have the advantage over us when it comes to launching new wood preservatives. Potentially, by the time we start to get meaningful results from our field testing in Canada, the preservative we are testing may no longer be utilized. This has been the situation in the US over the past 5 years, whereby the traditional soluble copper based preservatives ACQ and CA have already been largely replaced by particulate copper and non-metal systems.

What is really needed are relevant accelerated test procedures that can accurately predict the performance of treated wood used in service, closely simulating the applications and environments they will actually be used in. Such testing would allow wood preservative companies to generate data on new wood preservatives which could be used to develop treatment specifications and standards. In the future, relevant field efficacy data required for standardization and registration of wood preservatives in Canada will be one of the limiting factors in their development.

In summary, the future of the wood preservation industry largely depends on the ability to continue to provide reliable products to its end-users. Treated wood has had an excellent performance record over the years, and there is no reason to assume that it will not in the future. Nevertheless, we must be prudent and continue to ensure this is the case by properly and thoroughly testing wood preservatives prior to their introduction. Furthermore, wood preservatives should be treated to nationally recognized standards wherever possible to ensure adequate performance, especially in critical uses.

Thank you and I sincerely hope you enjoy the next few days of presentations.