

TERMITE CONTROL IN BUILDINGS

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The protection of buildings containing wood structural and/or decorative elements against the infestation of termites is extremely important in Toronto. As background to this subject I would like to give you a quick chronological history of the termite problem in Toronto. Termites were first discovered in the dock area in 1939, however, it was not until the early 60's that recognition was given to the considerable spread of this initial infestation and the damage being done to residential properties in the city's east end. As a result of the concern raised by this problem the city appointed a "Termite Control Inspector" in 1962 and passed a "Termite Control By-Law" in 1963. This initial By-Law has been amended a number of times in the intervening years and will most likely continue to be amended as our knowledge of the termite problem and ways of combating it increases.

In 1965 the city introduced a grant program whereby the residential homeowner could be reimbursed to have his house chemically protected against termite infestation on the basis of 50 percent of the cost, up to a maximum grant of \$250. During the ensuing years, up to 1977, the Termite Control program was concentrated primarily on chemical control and although the breaking of wood/soil contact was recognized as being a part of the problem it was never given the prominence that it should have received. This latter situation was reversed in May of 1977 when the city entered into an agreement with the Ontario Provincial Ministry of the Environment. In that agreement the Province of Ontario introduced a much more comprehensive grant program whereby they would provide financial assistance to residential properties of 60 percent of the cost of both chemical treatment and breaking of wood/soil contact, if required, up to a maximum grant of \$2,000. In addition to this provincial grant the city provides a reduced grant of 25 percent of the chemical cost only up to a maximum grant of \$125.

I have been referring to the phrase wood/soil contact and by that I mean any part of a structure made of wood that is in direct contact with the ground. This could be wood support posts for porches or verandas or in some cases supporting the house itself or wood skirtings or sheathing that is touching or very near the ground surface. In some extreme cases we find the whole house after years of settlement with wood members resting directly on the ground with little or no crawl space underneath. Under our revised program it is imperative that this wood/soil contact be broken, usually with concrete, before the chemical treatment is applied.

It should be noted that the comments made reflect solely the author's views and should not necessarily be construed as being City of Toronto policy.

It is in this area that I find myself in conflict with members of this Association and at times with the provisions of the Ontario Building Code (OBC). As you are probably aware the OBC allows the use of wood, which is pressure treated with a chemical toxic to termites, for breaking wood/soil contact. As far as I am concerned this is utter nonsense, because invariably these treated wood members are altered by the contractor or homeowner usually by cutting them to make them fit or by drilling holes in them to bolt them together.

As you can see by this sample of a 4 x 4 in. the penetration of the chemical is almost non-existent on two sides and when cut exposes a great deal of untreated wood.

On the other hand I have here a cross section cut from a piling where the chemical penetration ranges from one and a half to three inches. If this industry could assure me that they could consistently produce construction timbers from 2 x 4's on up with chemical penetration similar or equal to this piling then my objection to the use of pressure treated wood in termite areas would cease. However, as long as I continue to see inadequately treated wood such as this 4 x 4 being suggested for use in breaking wood/soil contact I will continue to object to it and certainly will not approve of its use under the grant program.

In closing, I would like to strongly recommend that you put your collective heads together and come up with a product that will be acceptable for use in termite areas in southern Ontario. I would further suggest that such a product be identified with a special stamp and that a policing group be formed amongst your membership to periodically check the treatment process.