

# Treated lumber may be toxic

The same chemical that prevents outdoor wood and lumber from rotting may also be toxic to humans, said a Kansas State University safety official.

Mitch Ricketts, who is the health, safety and environmental coordinator with K-State Research and Extension, advises people to be aware of the chemical pesticide, Chromated Copper Arsenate (CCA). Lumber that is used outdoors often is pressure-treated with CCA to make it resistant to termites and microorganisms that would otherwise cause the wood to rot.

Whether CCA is dangerous to humans is still being investigated by the Environmental Protection Agency, Ricketts said.

As a precaution, he offers the following advice:

- \* Wear gloves when handling treated wood and wash thor-

oughly after contact;

- \* Make sure children wash their hands after playing on playground equipment;

- \* Discard food or drinking water that comes into contact with treated wood;

- \* Don't use treated wood for cutting boards, counter tops, animal bedding, beehives or containers that hold food or animal feed;

- \* Do not burn treated wood - the smoke or ashes may be toxic.

The EPA recommends applying a penetrating oil-based stain to treated wood every year to help seal the chemicals.

Meanwhile, Ricketts said, safer alternatives are being developed; manufacturers are voluntarily removing CCA-treated lumber from the consumer market effective Dec. 31, 2003.

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