

PRESS RELEASE

Beyond Pesticides/National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides

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Beyond Pesticides Asks EPA Administrator Whitman to Immediately Suspend Registration of Wood Preservatives, Calls on Governors to Initiate Phase-out

Washington, D.C. (April 19, 2001) – Recent findings in Florida regarding contamination associated with the use of wood preservatives in playground equipment, leading to park closures, confirm the need for EPA to take immediate action to stop the use of wood preserving pesticides that result in the poisoning of children all across our country. Beyond Pesticides today urged the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to immediately begin action to cancel the registrations of pesticides used for wood preservation, namely chromated copper arsenate (CCA), pentachlorophenol (penta), and creosote. In addition, the group has sent a letter to the Governors of each state, asking them to initiate the phase-out of treated wood products on state lands.

“Given the extreme risks that are linked to exposure to these wood preserving pesticides, it is urgent that EPA act to protect public health,” said Jay Feldman, Executive Director of Beyond Pesticides. “Meanwhile, we are urging the Governors of each state to take action leading to a phase-out of treated wood products, which can be replaced by alternative technologies.”

“The fact is that there are currently available alternatives for most applications of chemically treated wood, making CCA, penta and creosote obsolete,” says Greg Kidd, Science and Legal Policy Director with Beyond Pesticides. The alternative technologies include recycled steel, composite plastics and concrete for utility poles, construction lumber and railroad ties. “All of the alternatives are economically viable, last longer than treated wood, do not require costly retreatment and do not leach toxic wood preservatives into the environment,” points out Mr. Kidd.

Penta, CCA and creosote have been tied to a large number of health problems including cancer, birth defects, kidney and liver damage and death. Penta, classified as a probable carcinogen in its own right, is contaminated with dioxins and furans. The National Institutes of Health recently classified dioxin as a known human carcinogen. Both arsenic and chromium (VI) are known carcinogens. Creosote is actually a toxic soup containing dioxins and various polycyclic hydrocarbons. All of the wood preservatives have been shown to leach out of treated wood.