

# Buying and using preservative treated wood

Preservative treatment makes wood highly durable. However, while one piece of treated wood may look very much like any other, it should never be assumed they have the same level of preservative protection. British Standards require that the strength and depth of preservative treatment is tailored to the end use of the wood. To achieve this, wood applications are grouped into what are known as 'Use Classes'.

This WPA Guide is designed to help you buy and use the right product for the job.

## Application Use Classes



The British Standard for industrial wood preservation is BS8417.

It specifies the minimum level of preservative required to give wood a service life of 15, 30 or 60 years depending on its application Use Class. The main Use Classes are UC2, UC3 and UC4.

INTERIOR		EXTERIOR	
Use Class 2		Use Class 3(u)	Use Class 4
Above the ground or DPC, covered		Above the ground (uncoated)	Direct contact with ground (and exterior structural support)
Internal construction timbers within the building envelope:  Roofing battens, timber framing, internal joists, sole plates.		External construction timbers:  Deck boards, fence rails and boards, cladding (including battens).	External construction timbers: Fence posts, agricultural timbers, retaining walls, playground equipment, decking posts, joists and beams.

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## Top Tips for buying and using correctly treated wood



**DO** establish the Use Class of treated wood you need.



**DO** get your supplier to verify, in writing, that treatment complies with British Standard BS8417 or has been produced in accordance with the WPA Benchmark quality assurance scheme.



**DO** make sure that all wood to be in permanent ground contact, or for outdoor structural purposes has Use Class 4 levels of protection. Anything less and service life, structural safety will be compromised - costly and inconvenient repairs will be necessary.



**DO NOT** buy/use wood treated for an internal application for an outdoor application - decay and failure is inevitable.



**DO NOT** buy/use wood that has been treated for an outdoor application for an indoor application - overtreatment is no more good practice than undertreatment.



### **ALWAYS**

- Apply a brush applied preservative to areas of untreated wood exposed by crosscuts, notches and large drill holes during installation.
- Use corrosion resistant fixings with treated wood used outdoors.
- Where appropriate personal protective equipment when working with any building material.

## Buy treated wood with third-party WPA Benchmark quality certification

The Wood Protection Association operates the **WPA Benchmark quality scheme** for preservative treated wood. It provides independent verification that a pressure impregnation plant and/or the preservative treated wood products conform with the specifications set out in the WPA Code of Practice for Wood Preservation to achieve BS8417 quality and service life performance.

**Benchmark**  
APPROVED **TREATER**



**Benchmark**  
APPROVED **PRODUCT**



To find a **WPA Benchmark** quality accredited wood treater visit:  
[www.thewpa.org.uk/member-products-services](http://www.thewpa.org.uk/member-products-services)

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