



DOES YOUR TREATED TIMBER COMPLY?

I was talking to Kent Powell (NSW State Manager) the other day and he brought up a couple of queries that were coming from customers. Here is a brief version of what he had to say...

"During the last 2 years we have seen steady volumes of wood coming in from Europe, however the cast of Saw Mills has grown from 3 or 4 long term importers to in excess of 10 or more recent producers for our market under various banners.

This volume has been required, no doubt about it, however the after treatment process here in Australia or offshore has left me somewhat confused and concerned. I've witnessed first-hand framing with no identification of treatment whatsoever, no branding, and no end stickers by piece. I've witnessed sections that are branded H2F incorrectly that don't meet the H2F section code! I've even seen lengths of timber showing a variety of treatment uptake or none at all.

So my worry is where does the client turn to should the question be asked by a home owner, building inspector or even one of our resellers or F&T fabricators. I approached George to again clarify for me and explain what our obligations are as a certified treater in Australia..."

Treated timber can be sold in Australia in any form with the correct due diligence and certification. However, preservative treated timber that is marketed and sold as H2F, H2-S, H3, H4, etc. must comply with the AS1604 series of Australian Standards. The focus of this article will be AS1604.1 (solid timber) and AS1604.4 (LVL), and specifically H2F & H2-S. We are currently in a self-certification phase for preservative treatment that is overseen by the TPAA (Timber Preservers Association of Australia). There is no problem doing this; we just need to remember that a failure in treatment will be detrimental to the whole industry and give our competitors an advantage. So what are the basics of the standards?

To comply with the AS1604 series treated timber must be branded with an identification code; a series of three descriptors. As an example, for solid timber the Meyer NSW identifier is 013 75 H2F. 013 is the treatment plant number registered with the TPAA (refer www.tpaa.com.au).

75 is the preservative code as stated in AS1604.1 (Bifenthrin). H2F is the treatment level, and for solid timber it must comply with AS1604.1. Note that each piece of structural framing must be legibly marked with the above branding. For envelope treated (sprayed) framing to comply with AS1604.1 the smallest cross-sectional dimension must be 45mm or less. There are also retention requirements based on the preservative used. For LVL that has preservative in the glue-line, to comply with AS1604.4 the maximum veneer thickness must be less than 4.8mm. LVL can also be envelope treated to H2-S as long as the cross-sectional area is less than 18,000mm² and the smallest cross-sectional dimension is 80mm (for Bifenthrin).

The clauses in the AS1604 series are there to make sure every piece of treated timber is protected and easily identified. It is difficult to do this when there is no branding, and if the blue dye (for identification only) is splotchy does this mean it has not mixed into the chemical properly or is the timber only treated in some areas? Meyer Timber takes treatment of timber seriously. The staff operating the equipment are trained to look out for any anomalies. Every pack of timber has one piece which is run through and checked for preservative uptake. Periodically there are also pieces tested independently to ensure our pack checks are calibrated and that the treatment line is running satisfactorily. You may also see some timber branded 013 75 meyTREAT. This is material that does not directly comply with the code due to size or composition but is still adequately treated and comes with the same 25yr guarantee from the chemical supplier.

Preservative treatment of timber is an important part of our industry and one that we cannot afford to let slip. There are levels and processes mandated in the Australian Standard as they have been confirmed from years of testing and are known to work. Any failures in treatment will be an advantage for our competitors so it is up to all of us to make sure that we comply. This factsheet only gives the basics, and there are some exceptions to what is noted above. If you have any queries or are unsure of anything the best place to go is the Timber Preservers Association of Australia (www.tpaa.com.au).

George

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