

## Treated Wood Waste Management

Because of its durability and resistance to decay, insects, mold, and water damage, pressure-treated wood is commonly used in the construction industry for things like fence posts, decking, pilings, docks, and railroad ties. However, what makes it withstand the elements can also make it toxic to humans and the environment. Harmful chemicals such as arsenic and copper are infused into the wood, and can contaminate soil, surface water, and groundwater when handled or disposed of improperly. These chemicals can also produce toxic gases after reacting with other materials in landfills.

### Identifying treated wood

Understanding how to distinguish treated wood from untreated wood is the first step to proper handling and disposal. Below are some things to look for when determining whether wood has been treated or not:

- Wood manufacturer stamp codes or end tags with treatment details
- Indentations or incising marks on the surface of the wood
- Discoloration with outdoor use (e.g., green or dark brown appearance)
- Interior rot with a solid outer shell
- Staining or discoloration only visible around the perimeter when cut

### Proper handling & disposal

Treated wood including the sawdust should never be burned, as it can release toxic fumes into the air. Also avoid using treated wood in vegetable gardens as it can leach into the soil and be taken up by the plants.

Treated wood also requires special disposal and should never be put in any curbside bin. Some landfills are authorized to accept treated wood waste; in Alameda County those are the Republic Services Vasco Road landfill and Waste Management's Altamont landfill, both located in Livermore. A full list can be found on the [California Water Board's website](#).

Treated wood can also be taken to select [transfer facilities](#), though not all of them accept treated wood from the public. When transporting, remember to keep treated wood separate from other materials and notify facility personnel upon arrival.

Our on-line [RE:Source guide](#) provides a one-stop-shop for current information on proper disposal of treated wood, including locations that accept treated wood from residents as well as contractors.



Check for incision marks across the entire surface of the wood. These incisions help the preservatives penetrate deep into the wood.



Check the end tag on the wood, or look for a colored stamp with additional details.



Pressure treated lumber often has a green tint, and may have a chemical or oily odor as well.



Untreated plywood and composite wood may go in the garbage, along with other untreated wood, even if it has been painted, stained, or lacquered. However, these types of wood should never go in the compost bin.