



GUIDANCE NOTE

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HOW THIRD-PARTY ACCREDITATION IS KEY TO TREATED WOOD SALES GROWTH



Supplying preservative treated wood is a highly competitive business. It's a business in which sales often come at the expense of quality. Market research shows that inconsistency in treated wood quality and end-user guidance is made worse by low buyer awareness about how to verify that wood has been treated correctly for its intended use. It's a malaise that has resulted in the fitness for purpose of treated wood being called into question.

There is clear evidence that professional users are increasingly risk-averse and are moving to alternative, man-made materials which they believe are more reliable.

In an age where sustainability and climate impact are key factors in the choice of one product over another, treated wood should have a distinct advantage but market perceptions about performance quality undermines its growth potential. Changing perceptions about quality is not something that can be tackled by an individual wood treater- it's the collective job of the entire supply chain.

This Wood Protection Association (WPA) Guidance Note is intended to help wood treaters and those who sell preservative treated wood understand why moving to third-party verification of quality is seen as the only credible way to build end-user confidence and grow demand. It is an objective to which the WPA and the Timber Development UK (TDUK) are totally committed.

Third-Party quality schemes work!

Quality refers to how well a product satisfies customer expectations, complies with industry standards and serves its purpose effectively within a given timescale. In the UK, wood treaters have historically self-certified that their products are treated correctly and meet industry standards. However, where mistrust in a products ability to meet those standards is widespread, self-certification fails to pass the credibility test. Evidence from the USA, Canada and Scandinavia shows that independent, third-party verification of treated wood quality is highly credible. Third-party quality schemes have operated for decades in these markets and are recognised as the main factor in sustaining buyer confidence and demand for treated wood.

Where treatment plant operations are within the scope of an ISO 9001 certificate, suppliers will often point to this as evidence they are treating wood correctly. This is not necessarily the case. ISO 9001 confirms there is a quality management system in place aimed at producing treated wood consistently. It does not measure or verify the fitness for purpose of a treatment process or treated wood product - that's the role of a third-party treated wood quality assurance scheme like the WPA Benchmark.

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The top 10 benefits of WPA Benchmark accreditation

1. Objectivity

Third-party quality schemes like WPA Benchmark are independent of a business and its suppliers. Independence provides credibility and an unbiased approach to assessing compliance with the recognised National Standards for wood preservation. Objective, third-party verification of quality is especially important in supply chains where there are concerns about the performance of a product.

2. Expertise

The independent auditors appointed to carry out WPA Benchmark quality assurance inspections have specialised experience and knowledge of modern wood preservative formulations and their application to wood by pressure impregnation processes.

This expertise provides a fresh perspective and can help wood treaters achieve improved control over the effectiveness of their treatment operations.

3. Efficiency

Because of their expertise and deep understanding of industrial wood preservation, WPA Auditors can complete on-site assessments quickly and with minimum disruption to operations or duplication of the procedures associated with audits for environmental and management systems.

4. Confidence boosting

The use of third-party quality schemes in North America and Scandinavia plays a vital role in boosting end user confidence in the fitness for purpose of treated wood products. When wood treaters subject their output to independent evaluation it demonstrates a clear commitment to producing treated wood that can be trusted to perform.

WPA Benchmark accreditation certificates provide tangible evidence of compliance with industry standards and add value by differentiating the certificated business from suppliers for whom treatment quality may not be a priority.

5. Saving time, money and reputation

The fresh perspective provided by independent third-party evaluation of treatment processes and individual products can lead to improved operating and marketing effectiveness. Experience also shows that customer complaints relating to the performance of products quality assured under the WPA Benchmark scheme are minimised - saving the time and money that would otherwise be a cost to the business and damage its reputation.



Photo credit: PTG Treatments

Independent auditors provide a fresh perspective aimed at helping a business improve control of its treatment operations.

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6. Enhances ISO 9001 quality management systems

ISO9001 is the international standard for quality management systems. Wood treatment operations are often included within the scope of certification of an individual business. This Standard does not measure or verify that wood is being treated correctly for its end use. What it does do is independently certify that a business conducts its operations in a consistent manner. Introducing an independent assessment of the treatment operations and ability to produce treated wood products compliant with industry standards demonstrates an unequivocal commitment to quality and customer satisfaction – the fundamentals of business success.

7. Positive environmental impact

Unlike man-made materials that consume finite raw materials and lots of energy to convert them into building products the softwood species used to make treated wood products are sustainable. They come from managed forests where more trees are planted than are felled each year. Using wood is also extremely valuable in tackling climate change. Forests are the lungs of the world. Growing trees absorb carbon dioxide from the environment and lock it up as carbon in finished wood products. Wood is good for the environment – correctly treated wood is even better because it locks carbon up for a lot longer.

As National Standards and building regulations increasingly call for the use of materials that are sustainable and contribute to the UK's carbon reduction goals it makes sense to promote the increased use of quality treated wood.

8. Being part of a national campaign

Wood Treators who become WPA Benchmark accredited benefit from being part of a major UK industry-led initiative to differentiate and promote the producers of correctly treated wood from wood treators where quality and customer satisfaction is not the priority.

9. Sales and marketing support

WPA Benchmark accredited wood treators have access to a free-of-cost marketing support package to promote the benefit of using third-party quality assured treated wood and where to buy it. This support package includes:

- ▶ Use of the WPA Benchmark logo on sales and marketing materials.
- ▶ Guidance on how to make the most of accreditation in communications.
- ▶ WPA Benchmark Use Class labels for product differentiation.
- ▶ Coordinated media relations campaigns targeting the treated wood supply chain by WPA and TDUK working in collaboration to grow demand for treated wood that can be trusted.

10. Compliance with TDUK Code of Practice

Members of the TDUK supply over 80% of all the wood products sold in the UK. Its Code of Practice requires that members only sell treated wood that has been produced under a third-party quality assurance scheme for wood factory impregnated with a preservative. The accreditation of a wood treator and the products they produce provides TDUK with clear evidence of compliance with this condition of membership.



Marketing support includes approved product labels supplied free of charge.



Photo credit: James Jones

Independent quality accreditation of treated wood is the only credible way to build confidence in its fitness for purpose.

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About WPA Benchmark

WPA Benchmark is a third-party quality scheme for treated wood developed in conjunction with wood treaters, preservative suppliers and BRE. Launched in 2011, its aim is to provide wood treaters with a credible way to tackle concerns about treated wood performance and verify compliance with UK industrial wood preservation standards in – BS 8417 and WPA Code of Practice.

BS 8417: Code of Practice for the Preservation of Wood defines the minimum levels of preservative treatment necessary to ensure the durability of wood in specific end-uses. However, BS 8417 does not provide instruction on how these critical minimum requirements are to be achieved - it points to the WPA Code of Practice: Industrial Wood Preservation to provide the essential guidance in achieving this performance benchmark.

The WPA Benchmark third-party quality scheme operates on the principle that wood consistently treated in accordance with the WPA Code of Practice is a durable material which will exhibit the minimum penetration and retention requirements for the relevant end use and service life.

There are two elements to the WPA Benchmark scheme. The first requires accreditation of a wood treater's operations. The second provides the quality compliance of a specific treated wood product or range of products where performance expectations are a high priority for customers e.g. ground contact products. Only WPA Benchmark approved treaters can be certificated as producers of WPA Benchmark approved products.



APPROVED TREATERS are companies operating a treatment plan or plants that have been subject to audit and shown to have robust quality management systems in place which demonstrate that they are capable of producing correctly treated material in accordance with the WPA Code of Practice under the terms of the WPA Benchmark scheme.



APPROVED PRODUCTS are those lines for which the production process has been subject to audit and for which the penetration and retention of preservative required in the WPA Code of Practice has also been assured by direct testing or by safe relationship testing. The scope of products approved will be recorded on a company's WPA Benchmark accreditation certificate and should be clearly stated in/on company marketing material.

Find out more

To find out what's involved in your business becoming WPA Benchmark accredited contact:

Neil Ryan, WPA Benchmark Scheme Administrator,
Email: neil@thewpa.org.uk Direct tel: 07756 434565

WPA Office,
Email: contact@thewpa.org.uk Tel: 01977 558147

Judge us by the company we keep

The majority of the wood treater members of the WPA and TDUK are WPA Benchmark quality scheme accredited. So too are a number of overseas wood treaters who produce treated wood for the UK. You can find out which wood treaters have opted to move from in-house verification of quality to the WPA Benchmark third-party quality scheme here:

www.thewpa.org.uk/member-products-services

A promotional flyer for WPA Benchmark. The top section features the WPA logo and the text "Buying treated timber? Get it from a supplier you can trust". Below this, there is a section titled "Interior and exterior environments are poles apart." which discusses the importance of proper treatment for timber in contact with the ground. It includes a QR code and a "Make sure it's suitable for ground contact" logo. The bottom section features two logos: "Benchmark Approved Treater" and "Benchmark Approved Product", both with the WPA logo. A call to action says "Find a WPA Benchmark Approved Treater" and provides the website "www.thewpa.org.uk". At the very bottom, there is a small logo for "TIMBER DEVELOPMENT" and a note about WPA's affiliation with Timber Development UK.

Example of promotional support literature.