

Creosote

Please note this information sheet relates to creosote products only. Wherever possible other wood preservative products should be used in line with the manufacturer's guidance rather than discarded.

There is still some confusion about creosote products and whether they can or can't be used. Under the Creosote (Prohibition on Use and Marketing) (No.2) Regulations 2003 (transposed into UK law as a result of Directive 76/769/EEC), creosote can only be used by professionals and for wood treatment in industrial installations in certain circumstances.

The use of creosote by amateurs was banned in 2003.

Reference should be made to the Regulations themselves for a full statement of the requirements. Please see the end of this document for further sources of information.

What is creosote?

Creosote [CAS No. 8001-58-9] is a complex mixture of chemicals (for example petrol) and is commonly used for the preservation of wood. It is defined in the European Standard EN 12303 (CEN 2000) as a brownish-black oily liquid with a smoky odour - a distillation product of coal tar.

To protect human health and the environment the European Commission has taken action to prohibit amateur use of creosote products and to restrict the use of creosote treated wood. This is due to studies which have suggested that creosote has a potential to cause cancer, and that this potential is greater than was previously thought.

The action being taken across the EU to ban the amateur use of creosote is a precautionary measure, and the Health & Safety Executive emphasise that 'any risk of cancer to members of the public is likely to be extremely small' (www.hse.gov.uk/biocides/copr/creosote.htm#a4). Creosote products can still be used for wood treatment in industrial installations or by professionals for in-situ retreatment provided they meet certain criteria regarding concentration levels. Products may no longer be sold to amateurs.

What should I do if I have any leftover creosote?

Creosote can no longer be used by 'amateurs' under the Creosote (prohibition on Use and Marketing) (No.2) Regulations 2003. Please do not use it and do not dispose of it down the drains. Containers should be left tightly sealed and a specialist company should be contacted to arrange for safe collection and disposal. Please contact the Waste Management section on 01702 215006 for advice.

Who should I contact for further information?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the regulatory authority for non-agricultural pesticides in Great Britain, including wood preservative products.

www.hse.gov.uk

www.hse.gov.uk/biocides/copr/creosote.htm#a4

The Environment Agency

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Waste and Street Scene

Enterprise, Tourism & the Environment

Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6ER

Email: council@southend.gov.uk Tel: 01702 215006

www.southend.gov.uk/recycling

Information Sheet HZW01/Apr11