

Risky lumber

by Nancy Deschênes

Have you ever played on a green-tint coloured playground structure as a child?

Nearly all of us have, at some point, come in contact with pressure-treated lumber, but most people are unaware of the risks involved in being exposed to it. This is because most people do not know the process by which wood is pressure treated.

In an article from the *Journal of Pesticide Reform*, Caroline Cox explains the procedure: "...the wood is submerged in a cylindrical tank containing the preservative that is then subjected to high pressure to force the chromated copper arsenate (CCA) into the cells of the wood." This preservative contains arsenic, chromium, and copper and it prevents the wood from decaying.

Unfortunately, it also renders the wood toxic. Health and Welfare Canada released a report in October, 1991, outlining the effects of exposure to pressure-treated wood. The report explicitly informs us that protective clothing should be worn when handling this wood to avoid exposure.

"Wear gloves to avoid direct skin contact when handling or working with pressure-treated wood. Wear gloves," reads the report. The re-

port repeats the phrase, "wear gloves", to make a point, yet our children play on this lumber on a daily basis. People work with this lumber in their yards — sawing, drilling and inhaling the sawdust which contains CCA.

The report tells us, as well, to wash thoroughly after contact with pressure-treated wood and in particular, before eating or drinking.

How many adults, let alone children, do this regularly after touching pressurized wood? Health and Welfare Canada also notes that the effects can range from "slight illnesses to deaths" as the preservative can be absorbed through inhalation, the skin and ingestion.

At this point, it is not known what the long-term effects of exposure are or how much exposure is too much. We do know that arsenic is a cancer-causing substance and that there is "some chance of adverse health effects at any level of exposure" (Health and Welfare Canada, 1993).

Other alternatives to pressure-treated lumber can include cedar or tamarack (larch wood). My work at the Ecology Action Centre has educated me to pay attention to notices like this that Health and Welfare Canada or other organizations release. Education is the key, action is the next step.

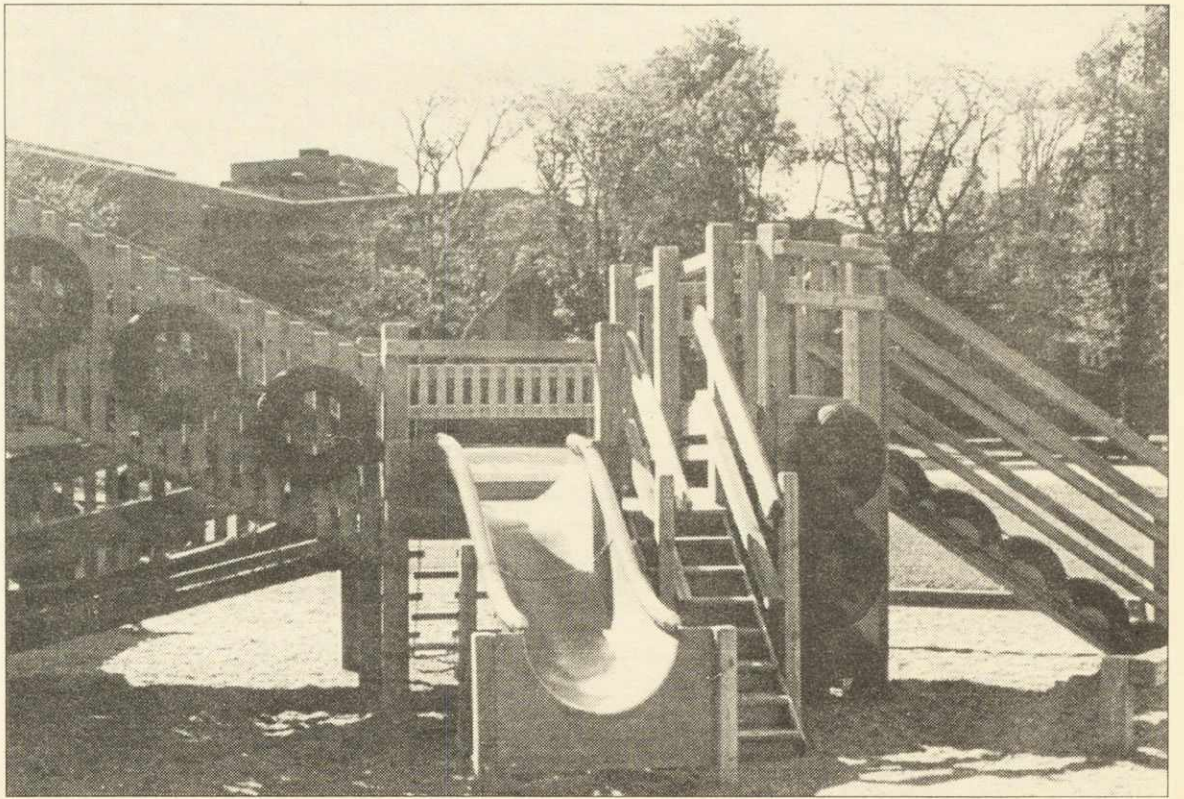


PHOTO: DANIELLE BOUDREAU

Pointless Ponderables

A missionary is walking through the jungle. He reaches a fork in the path; he knows that one fork leads to the missionary camp and the other leads to the cannibal camp.

Now there is a man standing at the fork, yet the missionary doesn't know

whether the man is a cannibal or a missionary. He knows that cannibals always lie, and that missionaries always tell the truth.

What one question can he ask the man that will enable him to take the correct path?

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CAMPUS CHALLENGE WINNER: On-campus students raised a whopping \$10,633.26!! Off-campus students raised \$10,021.96. Congratulations to on-campus students! It was much closer race than expected!

CONGRATULATIONS TO: Jason Hennigar and his entourage for raising the most money (\$1,538.67), and to Henderson/New Eddy Houses for raising \$5,105.53 (almost HALF of what all of on-campus combined raised)!

OTHER TOP SHINERS (raised over \$200): Cherie Mahonie and Jeff Surette; Dan Clements, Tammy Jollimore, Katrina Hurley, Dan Lee, Kate Arsenaull, Chris Whynacht, Heather MacDonald, Megan McCarthy, Sally Bird, Troy Brown, Chandra Lebowitz, Steven Higashi

There are lots of prizes for top shiners. You will be contacted by phone soon!!