

The Buyer's Guide to Preservative Treated Wood

Preservative treatment provides wood with added durability. However, it's a mistake to assume that all pressure treated wood is the same. Whilst one piece of treated wood may look very much like any other, the level of preservative protection could be very different. That's because the British Standard for wood preservation – BS 8417, requires that the loading and penetration of preservative, impregnated into the wood, is tailored to the desired end use.

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BS 8417 groups the applications for treated wood into 'Use Classes', the main three being:

BS8417 USE CLASS	SERVICE SITUATION	EXAMPLE
2	Above ground, covered occasional risk of wetting	All internal construction timbers within the building envelope, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tiling battens, framing timbers, Internal joists, sole plates, roof timbers
3(u)	Above ground, exterior uncoated exposed to frequent wetting	External construction timbers, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deck boards - not in ground contact Fence rails and boards Cladding and fascias
4	In ground contact or fresh water permanently exposed to wetting and/or providing exterior structural support	External construction timbers, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fencing, fence posts, agricultural timbers, retaining walls Playground equipment Decking posts, joists and sub-structures

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Which treated wood should I purchase?

Interior use only	specify Use Class 2
Exterior use, above ground (uncoated)	specify Use Class 3u
Ground or fresh water contact (or exterior structural support)	specify Use Class 4

Check List

Buying and Using Preservative Treated Wood

✓	Establish the Use Class of the timber you need, before ordering.
✓	Tell your supplier in writing, that the wood must be treated to that particular Use Class to comply with BS 8417.
✓	Ask your supplier to verify that the wood supplied meets your Use Class specification – on the delivery note and invoice or a treatment certificate.
✓	When buying from stock always check which Use Class the wood has been treated to.
!	NEVER substitute wood that has been treated for an indoor application for use in an external application – failure is inevitable.
!	For wood in permanent ground or fresh water contact, or providing exterior structural support, Use Class 4 levels of protection MUST be achieved. Anything less and service life, structural safety and customer satisfaction will be compromised.
!	When cross cutting, notching or boring treated timber products during installation, ALWAYS apply an end grain preservative treatment to freshly exposed areas – to maintain the integrity of the protection. NEVER put cut ends in the ground, even if end grain coated.

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