



Creosote

Creosote is derived from the distillation of tar from wood or coal and is used as a wood preservative. Pesticide products containing creosote as the active ingredient are used to protect wood against termites, fungi, mites and other pests that can degrade or threaten the integrity of wood products. These treated wood products are used in outdoor settings such as in railroad ties and utility poles. EPA is currently reevaluating all pesticides, including creosote as part of the Registration Review program (see Docket Number EPA-HQ-OPP-2014-0823 at <https://www.regulations.gov>).

Basic Information

- Creosote has been used as a wood preservative since 1948.
- Creosote is applied using high-pressure equipment in wood-preserving facilities by certified pesticide applicators only.
- Creosote is not approved to treat wood for residential use, including landscaping timbers or garden borders.
- Alternatives to creosote-treated wood include the following:
 - Wood treated with other preservatives approved by EPA;
 - Wood-alternative and composite materials; and
 - Species of wood that are resistant to pests.

Disposing of Items Treated with Creosote Safely

- Although creosote pesticide products are not available to homeowners, individuals may encounter reused creosote-treated wood in a residential setting (e.g., creosote-treated railroad ties that have been "recycled" after their original use).
 - Reuse of creosote-treated wood is not subject to regulation by EPA under pesticide laws.
 - If homeowners need to dispose of creosote-treated wood, it can usually be disposed of by ordinary trash collection (i.e., as municipal solid waste).

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- However, state and local governments may have specific guidance or instructions for disposing of treated wood, so please check with your state or local waste management program.
- Do not burn creosote or other preservative-treated wood in a residential setting to avoid possible inhalation of toxic chemicals in the smoke and ash.
- The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) is the federal law that creates the framework for the proper management and disposal of hazardous and nonhazardous solid waste.
 - For treated wood being disposed of by non-households, it is the responsibility of the persons generating the creosote-treated wood wastes to make a determination if it is hazardous waste.
 - Learn more about making a hazardous waste determination, www.epa.gov/hwgenerators/steps-complying-regulations-hazardous-waste.
 - State and local governments may have specific guidance or instructions for disposing of treated wood, so please check with your state or local waste management program.

Additional Information

- Learn more about creosote (EPA risk assessments, decisions, and other documents)

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