

Industry Provides In-Depth Look At The Art Of Wood Preservation

As required by a 1996 law, all pesticides—including wood preservative compounds—had to undergo a re-registration process with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), setting the stage for modern pesticide oversight. That process was concluded for all wood preservatives currently on the market.

Also required is a process of registration review after 15 years, which has been initiated by EPA for all wood preservatives currently in use for pressure treating ties. As a part of the review process, EPA seeks to gain a better understanding of the wood preservation process to dispel any myths the agency might have as to how wood is treated, why it is treated, and complexities associated with treating wood. To their credit, EPA staffers have frequently attended industry meetings to obtain a better understanding.

As a result of this engagement, EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs (OPP) contacted Kevin Ragon, executive director of the Southern Pressure Treaters Association (SPTA), who offered to provide briefing

information on the wood preserving industry so EPA could gain a better understanding of the industry.

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This outreach by the OPP's Reevaluation Team resulted in a request for a meeting of industry stakeholders. Ragon assembled a

diverse voluntary team of industry association and corporate representatives from all across the U.S. to gather at EPA offices to provide a series of presentations on May 2.

This meeting provided an opportunity for wood protection industry experts and registrants to travel to Washington D.C., to provide EPA officials an interactive educational experience on the nature of the complexities of the various businesses involved in the wood protection industry. The program focused on providing a "virtual" treating plant tour along with doing a fairly deep dive on the principles of wood preservation to some 30 EPA officials in attendance.

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Ragon was unable to attend and asked several team members to step in to handle the meeting in his absence. Dave Webb of the Creosote Council was asked to make Ragon's presentation. Greg Baumann of Nisus Corp. provided the necessary coordination with OPP staff, and Jim Gauntt, RTA executive director, was asked to moderate the meeting. See the topics covered in the meeting in the agenda box on page 15.

The below is excerpted from a report filed



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by Gauntt with Ragon and all the attending presenters, along with Bob Fronczak of the Association of American Railroads following the meeting.

[The] meeting was remarkably successful. The [industry] team assembled did an outstanding job by starting at the forest, offering some details on wood science, and then doing a fairly deep dive on treatment processes and chemistries to illustrate the true art of wood treating within the bounds of a scientifically designed and controlled environment in the modern day treating plant. Complexities of species, drying, equipment and plant construction and operation, plus a detailed look at the American Wood Protection Association (AWPA) standards and committees that design the parameters we all adhere to were covered in the three hours allotted.

Questions from EPA officials were many and were successfully responded to. If I were to characterize the general nature of these questions, they ranged from sincere interest in learning more about wood and how our industry assures QC, to eco-toxicity and human exposure. Again, I believe, as many of you have said since the meeting, that the team navigated these with a high level of professional expertise. Please note that we had one user group observing. Bob Fronczak graciously agreed to attend on behalf of the Class I RR's

AAR-Environmental Affairs Committee...

...Our many thanks again to Kevin Ragon for organizing this meeting as a result of EPA's outreach to him. Also, let me personally thank each and every presenter for staying on point and providing your expert knowledge to help EPA understand our complex and diverse industry.

In a follow-up email after the meeting, one EPA official said to Ragon:

"Kevin, I just wanted to thank you again for all of your coordination efforts to make today's wood treatment presentations to the Office of Pesticide Programs happen. Please let today's [presenters] know that it was truly a success and that several of my coworkers even wished that there was more time to keep learning. So much information to learn from so many knowledgeable people in their own respective fields!"

In summarizing the event, Gauntt said, "In the simple process of keeping the meeting on track and introducing the presenters, I learned more about the changes and complexities in our industry than I could have in any other venue. I was impressed that EPA had such a sincere interest in learning about what is obviously an industry vital to the U.S. economy and one with such a diverse, complex and rich heritage. Applying the science of wood preservation to so many products and species truly is an art." ■

MEETING AGENDA

Understanding Wood: Softwood & Hardwood

Introduction & Industry Video
Pine/Softwood Species/Variability
Hardwood Species/Variability

Understanding Wood Treating

General Treatment Process
Overview
General BMP Overview

AWPA

Standards, Evaluation Methods

Industrial Treatments

Waterborne Treatments
Oil Borne Treatments

Residential Treatments

Water Borne Treatments
& Methods
Discussion/Q&A/Adjournment