

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE (FORMERLY WOODWORDS)

December 1999

## "Louisiana Termite Update"

In response to reported widespread Formosan Termite damage in the New Orleans areas, the Louisiana Legislature approved a bill to eradicate existing colonies of the termites and develop a program to protect consumers from termite damage in new buildings. The Commissioner of the A&F department, Bob Odom, was given the responsibility (and apparently a lot of latitude) in developing and implementing the programs. In August Odom invited all interested parties to the first of a series of meetings to discuss the development of new construction regulations. Those meetings continue, with the latest being the week of October 18.

Odom has said that he has the authority to develop and implement the new regulations on his own but would prefer to have the participation of all affected parties. He has also said that it's his intent to develop a program that won't seriously affect the wood industry in Louisiana. Odom established a series of tentative deadlines for the project: input from the interested parties by January 1, implementation in the New Orleans area by June 2000 and implementation throughout the state in 2001.

One of the initial discussions of the interested parties was to determine how far the requirement for treated wood should extend. Should it just apply to structural elements or should it be required on a wider scope? The general consensus was that to address all of the concerns of the State staff, it would be necessary to require all framing and sheathing to be treated. That hasn't changed at this point.

Many of those attending these meetings have been working in study groups, attempting to develop recommendations to Odom. The findings of the study groups to date are as follows:

### ENVIRONMENTAL

- Concerns over indoor air quality in structures with large quantities of treated wood. There is apparently only limited research on this matter.
- Concerns over whether fires in such structures would produce toxic conditions for occupants and fire service personnel.
- Louisiana agencies with control over toxic materials have been contacted and have promised to send information on what will be required in order to dispose of large quantities of scrap treated lumber.

### LUMBER

This group is attempting to determine whether there will be adequate facilities within the state

to produce the anticipated quantities of treated wood that will be required under the program envisioned by Odom and his staff. Of particular concern is whether there will be enough capacity to produce KDAT material.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT**

- Figures generated to this point indicate that cost of houses—although this program will apply to all structures—would increase 2 to 3%.
- The group has recommended that the State commission a study to determine the overall impact on the economy of the state and consider all possible affected interests, not just home building and wood product producers. It appears that this will be done by LSU, but no details are available yet.

## **ENGINEERED WOOD PRODUCTS**

The findings of this group are that there are common engineered wood products for which there are no recognized treating standards, with I-joists being the most commonly discussed example. It has also been determined that the capability to treat OSB doesn't exist in the United States. It is felt that it will be difficult to use non-standardized alternate methods of treatment on any of these products because:

- The effects of the treatment on both the physical and structural properties of the products are unknown.
- The effectiveness of these treatments on termites as used is unknown.
- Manufacturers wouldn't provide a warranty (see below) on products with these sorts of treatments.
- There are environmental questions about some of these treatments such as surface-applied solvents.

## **WARRENTY**

The State wants a 30-year warranty on treated wood products used under the program. The solid-sawn manufacturers are capable of providing such a warranty on CCA-treated products, but are concerned that the State wants the warranty to cover labor as well as materials. There is also a concern about warranties when materials from different manufacturers are used in the same structure. It doesn't appear that warranties would be offered on any of the non-CCA treatments or treatments for which there are no national standards.

At the October meeting it was announced that there will be only two more meetings—November 18 and December 9. The study groups were asked to wind up their work and submit their findings in writing. These reports should include instances where there is still a need for more information, where there are going to be problems in meeting the State's expectations, and where there are objections and disagreements with the proposed program. The reports will be submitted to Commissioner Odom by the end of the year for his review. What wasn't said, but seemed to be implied, is that Odom may choose to continue the work by the interested parties beyond his original January 1 deadline.

If you have any questions, please contact Dennis Pitts at the American Forest and Paper Association at 972/690-0242.

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