



FRTW & Code Compliance:

Are surface-applied fire retardants code compliant?

In recent years, updates to the International Building Code (IBC) have clarified important requirements for Fire Retardant Treated Wood (FRTW). According to the latest version of the code, it is essential that FRTW products be impregnated with chemicals through a pressure process or other approved methods during manufacturing.

Surface treatments such as paints, stains, and coatings do not meet the requirements for FRTW and are not considered compliant.

Previously, some interpretations of the code allowed for surface-applied treatments to be marketed as FRTW, but this has been explicitly disallowed in the new code revisions. The updated code specifies that for a wood product to be classified as FRTW, it must have a flame spread index of 25 or less when tested according to ASTM E84 or UL 723 standards. This testing must be extended for an additional 20 minutes to ensure compliance. The treatment must be an integral part of the wood's manufacturing process, providing comprehensive protection to all surfaces of the product.

The International Building Code Defines Fire Retardant Treated Wood in Section 2303.2 (International Building Code, 2021 Edition):

"...Any product that, when impregnated with chemicals by a pressure process or other means during manufacture, shall have, when tested in accordance with ASTM E84 or UL 723, a listed flame spread index of 25 or less. Additionally, the ASTM E84 or UL723 test shall be continued for a 20-minute period and the flame front shall not progress more than 10 1/2 feet (3200mm) beyond the center line of the burners at any time during the test."

The phrase "other means during manufacture" is clarified in Section 2303.2.2 (International Building Code, 2021 Edition):

"For wood products impregnated with chemicals by other means during manufacture, the treatment shall be an integral part of the manufacturing process of the wood product. The treatment shall provide permanent protection to all surfaces of the wood product. The use of paints, stains or other surface treatments is not an approved method of protection as required in this section."

It is crucial for retailers, lumberyards, building code officials, and users of FRTW to be aware of these changes. Ensure that any FRTW products used in construction meet these updated requirements to guarantee compliance and safety. Please review product labels and documentation carefully to verify that FRTW products are properly treated and meet all code specifications.

All FRTW sold by Biewer Lumber Fire Retardant Specialists is pressure impregnated, fully code-compliant Fire Retardant Treated Wood. It is appropriate for use in all applications where Fire Retardant Treated Wood is required.

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TO PROTECT YOURS.**

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