



## Plugged Holes in Treated Wood

As a buyer of pressure-treated wood products receiving your order or while shopping for items in the store, you may be surprised to see pieces containing plugged holes. If you are like most consumers, you may think, “That can’t be good!” On the contrary, it can be a good thing, and here’s why!

Like all manufactured products, various quality control practices determine if pressure-treated wood products meet the specified minimum quality standards. To meet building code specifications; treated wood products must conform to industry quality requirements. These requirements are checked by the producing treating plant, and then the plant’s quality control process is audited by independent, third-party agencies that ensure plants produce treated wood products in accordance with industry standards. Finding these plugged holes in pieces of treated lumber is evidence that this quality system is in place.



*Treated Wood Plugs*

The American Wood Protection Association’s (AWPA) Book of Standards provides the minimum specifications and practices for evaluating preserved wood. Most model building codes, including the International Building Code, will specify AWPA Standards, or equivalent, as minimum acceptance criteria. The industry standards used to evaluate the level of treatment in wood products require a sampling process.

The treating plant is responsible for applying this process on every batch or “charge” of wood that it treats. The minimum preservative penetration and retention requirements must be met before a charge is considered conforming and released for shipment. Before shipment, however, the resulting boring holes used in the evaluation process must be filled with tight-fitting treated wood plugs to prevent easy access by insects or decay fungi once in service. While these boring holes may appear a bit unsightly, they do not negatively impact the structural integrity or usability of the sampled piece.



*Sample Third-Party Agency Quality Mark*

Charges documented as conforming for preservative penetration and retention by the treating plant are subject to further sampling by accredited third-party inspection agencies as they audit the effectiveness of in-plant quality control procedures. The third-party inspection audit process includes the same sampling process, creating additional plugged pieces of wood. Under an accredited third-party quality audit program, plants in good standing may use the agency’s quality mark.

Now that you understand how pressure treated wood products are evaluated, you can view the resulting plugged holes as part of the quality control process. Enjoy your treated wood products with confidence!



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