

Copper-chrome-arsenate (CCA) burnt timber and ash

Information for residents

What is CCA-treated timber?

Copper-chrome-arsenate (CCA) is a wood preservative used to protect wood from rotting, fungi and insects. Freshly treated CCA-timber can be identified by its yellow/greenish colour which fades to grey over time. It is not always easy to identify if a product is CCA-treated timber and if in doubt it is important to treat the timber as if it does contain CCA.

CCA-treated timber has been commonly used in private and public recreational areas for pergolas, decking, cubby houses, claddings, posts, gates, fencing and landscaping purposes.

What happens to CCA-treated timber when it is burnt?

In the event of a bushfire, structures made from CCA-treated timber can be damaged or destroyed. When cleaning up, remember

- the ash contains copper, chromium and arsenic
- the ash may pose a health hazard if it is inhaled or swallowed, especially by children or grazing animals
- it is essential to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves and dust masks.

How can ash affect my health?

Although ash is too large to be breathed into the lungs, ash particles can irritate the eyes, nose and throat.

Ash can also be accidentally swallowed. If the ash originates from CCA-treated timber it will contain arsenic. Swallowing just a few grams of CCA-treated timber ash may be damaging to your health.

Immediate symptoms of acute arsenic poisoning include nausea, abdominal pain, vomiting and diarrhoea, followed by a 'pins and needles' feeling in the skin.

What can I do to protect my health?

To avoid unnecessary exposure to ash, practice good hygiene and use personal protection when cleaning up ash from CCA-treated timber.

If you come into contact with ash, wash it off your hands, face and neck as needed. If ash gets in your eyes, gently wash out your eyes with clean water.

If you or anyone in your family experience symptoms or is suspected to have swallowed ash from CCA-treated timber, seek medical attention.

Children should be kept away from ash until clean-up is complete

Young children are more likely to swallow ash. As a precaution, children, pets and farm animals should be kept away from areas impacted by ash from CCA-treated timber.

Personal protection when collecting ash from CCA-treated timber

- Wear gloves and consider wearing disposable overalls.
- Wear a disposable dust mask (P1 or P2 dust masks are available from hardware stores) to minimise breathing in dust.
- Wear safety glasses to prevent exposure to the eyes.
- Moisten the ash prior to handling it to minimise dust.
- When cleaning up dust do not work in windy conditions.



- Use a shovel to pick up ash – do not spread it around or wash it down the drain or sewer.
- Remove and discard disposable overalls and/or wash clothing and clean your shoes before reuse.
- Wash your hands after finishing clean-up work and before eating, smoking, preparing food or contact with young children.

Collection and disposal of CCA-treated timber ash

- Do not bury CCA-treated timber ash or other building waste.
- Small amounts of CCA-treated timber ash can be placed in a sealed plastic bag and disposed of at your local waste facility.
- Contact your local council for advice on where to dispose larger amounts of CCA-timber ash. Ash must be double bagged and sealed to ensure it's contained during transport and handling.
- Do not put CCA-timber or ash in your garden organics bin.

Contact your local Council for advice on specific local requirements.

Who will do the clean-up?

The NSW Government and the Commonwealth are jointly covering the clean-up cost of insured and uninsured residential and eligible commercial (small business and primary production) properties destroyed in the NSW bushfires since 1 July 2019.

Work will include

- removal of known hazardous materials, including asbestos
- removal of materials destroyed by bushfire and hazardous trees near the destroyed or damaged primary residence or place of business
- removal of damaged driveways that could impact on the safety of the clean-up
- removal of concrete slab foundations (with consent of building owners).

Register for clean-up

To register for the bushfire recovery clean-up program call Service NSW on 13 77 88 or go to www.service.nsw.gov.au.

It is not advisable to do any major clean-up works yourself as professional contractors will be engaged to do this work.

All waste should be transported and disposed of according to the NSW legal requirements, of which professional contractors are aware.

If you are undertaking minor clean-up works yourself, please check with your council or the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) about the waste you are moving, and ensure you are taking all recommended health precautions.

Key contacts

Service NSW – to register for the bushfire recovery clean-up program call 13 77 88 or go to www.service.nsw.gov.au. Service NSW also has other useful information.

Your local **Public Health Unit** – for CCA-treated timber and human health questions call 1300 066 055.

EPA – for further advice on the environmental effects of CCA-treated timber call 131 555.

Recovery – your local council will lead the recovery effort. See its website for information.

NSW Environment Protection Authority

Email: info@epa.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.epa.nsw.gov.au

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