

Brussels, 26 October 2001

Dangerous preparations: Commission directive restricts creosote applications

The European Commission today adopted a new Directive banning the sale to consumers of the wood preservative creosote, after an EU scientific committee concluded from a recent study that creosote has a greater potential to cause cancer than previously thought, and exceeds the limits permissible under existing legislation. The ban, which takes effect from 30 June 2003 at the latest, also applies to creosote-treated wood. Creosote may still be used for industrial applications, e.g. railway sleepers and telegraph poles, but with tougher restrictions on its composition.

Creosote is a mixture of substances obtained from the distillation of coal tar and is classified as carcinogenic on the basis of some of those substances. One of them, *benzo-a-pyrene* (BaP), is used as a marker in the mixture. BaP's classification as a carcinogenic substance does not currently apply where its concentration is less than 50 parts per million. The study, requested by the Commission, was presented to the *Scientific Committee on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment* (CSTEE) for peer review. CSTEE concluded that the study was well designed, and that there is scientific evidence to support the opinion that there is a cancer risk to consumers from creosote with BaP at a lower concentration than that currently permissible under Community legislation¹ and/or from wood containing such creosote, and that the magnitude of the risk gives clear reasons for concern.

The new Directive² not only protects consumers, but also significantly strengthens restrictions on the industrial use of creosote-treated wood through a ten-fold reduction in the BaP content compared to the current EU legislation. It also guarantees that such wood will not be used where there is a risk of frequent skin contact, e.g. in garden furniture. For further information please visit:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/chemicals/index.htm>

¹ Directive 94/60/EC which amends Directive 76/769 on the marketing and use of dangerous substances and preparations

² C(2001)3227