

# CREOSOTE COUNCIL

## UNION POLITICS OVERSHADOWS SCIENCE IN NEW YORK LAW PHASING OUT A SINGLE USE OF CREOSOTE

**Pittsburgh, July 3 --** A controversial bill phasing out one long-time use of creosote-treated wood that was signed into law today by New York's Governor Elliot Spitzer was called the product of "politics, not science" by the Creosote Council, a stewardship organization representing the producers of creosote and creosote-treated wood products throughout the United States. The law primarily affects creosote-treated marine and foundation piling, which is used in major construction projects and is an important component of the nation's critical infrastructure. The bill does not apply to creosote-treated piling already in use within New York. Nor does it affect creosote-treated railway ties or utility poles.

"The dockbuilders local union, which is affiliated with the politically powerful and well-heeled Council of Carpenters, has been trying for years to pass a bill like this in New York or New Jersey. Similar bills in the last three years were vetoed by Governor Pataki. But regrettably, politics, union campaign contributions, and the emotions of a handful of dockbuilder union members, who blame creosote for their unsubstantiated health concerns while admitting that they practice poor occupational hygiene, have overshadowed the scientific evidence showing that creosote-treated wood is safe when handled properly," said David Webb, Administrative Director of the Council.

Creosote-treated wood is a proven, highly beneficial, cost-effective construction material that does not harm human health or the environment when handled and used properly. A recently published mortality study of more than 2,000 workers at eleven creosote wood treatment and manufacturing plants showed no evidence of increased deaths from cancers or non-malignant chronic diseases, despite years of working closely with creosote. Its classification as a probable carcinogen is based on animal studies, and not on any evidence that directly relates human cancers to the creosote used as a wood preservative. Simple precautionary measures are recommended, however, to avoid the risk of skin irritations.

"When we tried to meet with union representatives, they literally pounded on the table and told us that it is too much trouble for their members to follow standard federal occupational safety guidelines, like wearing gloves and long-sleeved shirts," said Webb. "Instead, they demanded that creosote-treated piling be banned, even though it has been used safely and effectively for decades. As a result, New York contractors will be forced to use alternative materials that are

more expensive, less effective, and less well studied than creosote. This is a disservice to the state's workers, and it seriously undermines the state's critical infrastructure."

Creosote-treated wood is used primarily for railroad ties and utility poles; its use in foundation and in marine pilings is heavily favored by the construction and transportation sectors as well as the military and port operators because of its high performance at relatively low cost. Creosote-treated foundation and marine pilings have in many instances exceeded 80 years of service.

As with any pesticide, creosote is carefully regulated at both the federal and state levels. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is currently in the last stages reregistering creosote for use as a wood preservative, including for treatment of marine and foundation piling.