

# CREOSOTE COUNCIL

## UNION POLITICS OVERSHADOWS SCIENCE IN NEW JERSEY AND NEW YORK LAWS OPPOSING A SINGLE USE OF CREOSOTE

**Pittsburgh, July 13** -- Controversial bills opposing one long-time use of creosote-treated wood that have been signed into law in New York and New Jersey were 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 laws primarily affect creosote-treated marine and foundation piling, which are used in major construction projects and are an important component of the nation’s critical infrastructure. The bills do not apply to creosote-treated piling already in use within the two states. Nor do they 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 bills like this in New Jersey and New York. 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 and New Jersey contractors will be forced to use alternative materials that are more expensive, less effective, and less well studied than creosote, and Atlantic Wood has stated that it will close its Hainesport, NJ treatment facility. This is a disservice to the states' workers, and it seriously undermines the states' 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.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently in the last stages of reregistering creosote for use as a wood preservative, including for treatment of marine and foundation piling. The reregistration process involves EPA's very thorough review of multi-year, state-of-the art health and safety and other studies, which the Creosote Council generated in compliance with EPA protocols at a cost of over \$5 million. The sponsors of the New York and New Jersey bills chose to ignore these studies and the regulatory process mandated by Congress. The reregistration reviews of creosote and other wood preservatives are being coordinated by EPA and will be completed by September 2008.