

## Common Building Material Holds Toxic Danger

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### ***Congresswoman Argues Against Pressure-Treated Wood***

CHICAGO -- It's likely that you'll find it in a park bench, a family's deck, and a child's playground. They're all made from wood, and although it seems harmless, it's what happens when the wood from a tree is turned into wood for building that's cause for concern.

Target 5's Lisa Parker recently examined the dangers of pressure-treated wood, noting that most of the outdoor lumber used today is pressure-treated with toxins, and that can be more dangerous than most of us know.

"You have to ask yourself 'is this sort of a made up issue or not?'" a father at a local playground wondered.

According to Parker, it's not a made up issue. In fact, she said, the most common toxin used in pressure-treated wood contains arsenic. It acts as a preservative and a pesticide, but is also a poison and some worry that it could be poisonous to those most vulnerable.

"A 12-foot section contains about an ounce of arsenic, which is actually enough in its pure form to kill about 250 people," Rep. Jan Schakowsky said.

Schakowsky is now on a mission to get rid of the wood entirely, Parker reported. She's hoping to pass a bill that would not only require the lumber industry to find an alternative, but to dispose of all arsenic-treated lumber in lined landfills.

And while the Environmental Protection Agency is already calling for a voluntary phasing-out of the pressure-treated wood by 2004, Schakowsky said that doesn't go far enough.

"My concern is that it is voluntary and it's not a requirement and, at worst, the legislation I propose would be redundant, but at least it could protect a lot of kids from a hazard," Schakowsky told NBC5.

The EPA is still months away from an on-going risk analysis. Government scientists are following up on a handful of cases where illnesses may be directly linked to exposure to treated wood. While those cases are still pending, Parker said the potential danger still lurks in the most unsuspected places. "We know at least that potentially there is a hazard there," Schakowsky said, "so, I think it makes total sense to take precautions right now."

Parker reported that there are ways parents can protect children in the meantime. You can seal the wood once a year with polyurethane. You can cover picnic tables with a tablecloth and after visits to the playground, as all health professionals recommend, you can wash your children's hands.