Materials & Product Lifespan

Natural products such as timber will deteriorate when in contact with the ground. Timber will not rot when its moisture content is below approximately 20% for the bulk of the time. When in direct contact with the ground, timber's moisture content will increase. However, when treated and well-maintained timber products can last for 10 to 15 years. Regular maintenance is therefore vital with all timber products.

Joints, junctions between components, holes for fixings, end grains and horizontal sections where water can be held will result in a higher moisture content and could shorten the lifespan of your products.

When products are not being used, for example during winter, we recommend placing these into dry storage or covering these over with waterproof coverings to ensure that they are protected from harsher weather.

Most of our products are built from softwood and accordingly should be treated with a form of wood preservative such as varnish, lacquer or paint. The preservative should be permanent, insoluble in water, safe, clean and compatible with finishes etc. The use of CCA in new equipment has been banned. The ban is not retrospective and there is no need to make any changes to existing play equipment. RoSPA has no evidence of any safety problems with the use of CCA. On new equipment the supplier should confirm that the wood has been treated in accordance with the requirements of DEFRA.

Most wood preservatives only provide a thin top layer of protection. Any joints or connections should be checked, and additional protective coats added. Where cracks develop in the timber water can be retained for greater periods. You should ensure that any cracks are completely dry of water content and then ensure that they are treated in an extra coat of wood preservative. Any treated equipment should be stored for a minimum of two weeks before use.

Cracking in timber products

Timber is a natural material and cracking will occur. Most cracks will not have a material impact upon the strength of the product. Cracks should not exceed 10mm in width as this can be a "finger trap" as defined by EN 1176. Timber products that have a similar moisture content to their natural surrounding will typically crack less. Wood preservatives help to protect against the absorbance and retention of water within the timber.

Fixings and connections

Most fixings within our products are bolts and screws as nails are generally inefficient and liable to allow the timber to move. Wood preservatives may accelerate corrosion on metal fixings and accordingly we use galvanised or stainless-steel fastenings wherever possible.

01277 297 001 | info@moeducation.co.uk | www.moeducation.co.uk
MOE, Unit 5a, Dollymans Farm, Doublegate Lane, Rawreth, Wickford, Essex, SS11 8UD
The Woodland Ministry of Outdoor Education Ltd. Registered in England. Company No. 09185181
Registered O ce: 7 Nelson Street, Southend-On-Sea, Essex, SS1 1EH

Further information

Relevant British Standards include:

- BS EN 636, part 3 and BS4079 (Plywood)
- BS5268 (Timber)
- BS5589 (Preservative)
- BS EN 1176 (Equipment Standards).

The Timber Research and Development Association (TRADA) - https://www.trada.co.uk/

If you have any questions, regarding what you have read in this document. Kindly contact our head office on: info@moeducation.co.uk