

## Xtendex Composite-Decking Plant Closes

In July, McFarland Cascade shut down the plant that manufactured Xtendex composite decking and is now seeking another manufacturer to make a similar product at a lower cost. Among the reasons for ceasing operations at the Carney Timber Co. in Barrie, Ontario, were “Canada’s high energy costs and the weakening U.S. dollar,” Gregory Phillips, a product manager at McFarland Cascade, told *Canadian Plastics* magazine.

Phillips also told the magazine that manufacturing Xtendex “is demanding on equipment, which adds to the expense of the product.” Unlike most composite decking on the market, Xtendex contains rice hulls. The high silica content in the hulls means not only are they naturally more resistant to mold and moisture than wood fibers are, but they are also more abrasive to metal in the production process.

Washington-based McFarland Cascade has enough inventory to supply Xtendex through the rest of 2007 and into 2008, according to product manager Gary Maulin. But then “Xtendex is done,” says Maulin, adding that the company is currently looking at pricing and proposals from several manufacturers to produce another board in its place. — *Laurie Elden*

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## Free Guide to Wood Preservatives

With CCA no longer used in residential applications, and ACQ’s tendency to corrode metal, laboratories have been busy trying to develop new and improved preservatives. Four that have been introduced in the last year or so have also been approved for use with southern pine — Wolmanized L3 Outdoor (Arch Wood Protection), Smart Sense Micropro (Osmose), Protectol CX (BASF Corp.), and CuNap 5-W (Merichem Co.) — leading the Southern Pine Council to add them to the updated version of its specification guide, *Pressure-Treated Southern Pine*.

The 16-page booklet is packed with data about wood preservatives and their recommended uses and required retention levels with regard to various applications and environmental conditions. Included, too, are discussions of fastener and connector corrosion; grade and quality marks; and storage, use, and handling of treated lumber.

For a free copy of the new, 2007 edition of the guide, call the Southern Pine Council at 504/443-4464, extension 207, and ask for publication #300, or go the Web site at [www.southernpine.com](http://www.southernpine.com) and click on “publications” in the left-hand column. — *L.E.*

## Mixed Economic Signals

Everyone’s trying to predict where the housing and remodeling markets are going to go, but who’s right and how does it affect the decking industry?

In the study “Wood & Competitive Decking to 2011,” published in July, The Freedonia Group predicts overall demand for decking will increase 2.2 percent annually through 2011, with plastic and composite products continuing to take market share away from wood. The market-research firm notes that because the decking industry is dominated by improvement and repair, it will be “relatively stable” compared with the troubled new-housing market.

The home-improvement industry, however, may not be so immune to the forces rocking new-residential construction. A survey released in October by TNS, another market-research group, found that one-third of Americans plan to reduce spending in response to the sub-prime mortgage crisis. Among adults with children under the age of 18, 23 percent said they were likely to cut back on home improvement spending.

The news out of Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies isn’t on the plus side, either. The Leading Indicator for Remodeling Activity for the third quarter, released October 16, predicts a 2.3 percent drop in remodeling spending in 2007 compared with 2006. Kermit Baker, director of the Remodeling Futures Program at the Joint Center, said in a press release, “The recent problems in credit markets are expected to dramatically reduce the level of cash-out mortgage refinancing activity. Given that equity withdrawals have been a key source of funding for home improvements, market spending is expected to suffer.” — *L.E.*

**Batteries exploding** while in use and while being charged prompted Milwaukee Electric Tool Corp. to recall about one million power-tool battery packs in July. The company received 35 reports of malfunctioning batteries, with 11 injuries (cuts, bruises, and partial hearing loss) resulting. Included in the recall are 14.4- and 18-volt 2.4-amp-hour nicad Milwaukee Power Plus, Chicago Pneumatic, and Extractor battery packs manufactured between July 1999 and February 2004. Contact Milwaukee at 800/729-3878 or go to [www.milwaukee tool.com](http://www.milwaukee tool.com) to download instructions for requesting a free replacement.

**About 800,000 Skil** circular saws that may have a faulty trigger switch were recalled in August by Robert Bosch Tool Corp. Saws with a model number of 5650, 5700, 5750, or 5755 purchased from January 2002 through December 2006 may be affected. For more details, contact the company toll-free at 866/761-5572 or go to its Web site at [www.skil.com](http://www.skil.com).

**The Timberland Co.** announced in September that it is offering free replacements for PRO Direct Attach Steel Toe Series boots, model numbers 26002, 65016, 26038, and 38021, made in the Dominican Republic between

September 2005 and September 2007. No injuries have been reported, but product testing showed that boots may not come up to safety standards for compression and impact resistance. See the recall notice at [www.timberlandpro.com](http://www.timberlandpro.com) for more information, or call 800/445-5545.

**Sagging demand** in the struggling residential building market led the Trex Co. to shut down its Olive Branch, Miss., factory in September; the company's second-quarter sales were down 2 percent from the same period last year. The composite decking and fencing manufacturer is currently consolidating production in its two other plants, located in Winchester, Va., and Fernley, Nev., with plans to reopen the Mississippi plant when demand picks up again.

**U.S. consumption of arsenic** has dropped precipitously since wood treaters stopped using CCA (chromated copper arsenate) to treat lumber intended for residential use, according to the 2006 *U.S. Geological Survey Minerals Yearbook*. Domestic consumption was about 7,300 metric tons in 2006, down from 21,600 metric tons in 2003. Still, nonresidential use of CCA means the U.S. continues to be the top consumer of arsenic in the world. Arsenic is also used in metals in electronics and as a government-approved additive to poultry feed.

## 2007 Shows & Events

### November 27-30

#### **International Pool & Spa Expo/ Backyard Living Expo**

Hanley Wood Exhibitions\*  
Orlando, Fla.  
972/536-6363  
[www.poolandspaexpo.com](http://www.poolandspaexpo.com)

### December 11-12

#### **Northwest Builders Show**

National Association of Home Builders  
Bellevue, Wash.  
800/368-5242  
[www.northwestbuildersshow.com](http://www.northwestbuildersshow.com)

## 2008 Shows & Events

### February 13-16

#### **International Builders' Show**

National Association of Home Builders  
Orlando, Fla.  
202/266-8111  
[www.buildersshow.com](http://www.buildersshow.com)

### February 27-March 1

#### **Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Expo 2008**

Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association  
Atlanta  
703/522-0086  
[www.hpbexpo.org](http://www.hpbexpo.org)

### March 4-6

#### **DeckExpo**

Hanley Wood Exhibitions\*  
Orlando, Fla.  
866/475-6707  
[www.deckexpo.com](http://www.deckexpo.com)

### March 26-29

#### **JLC Live Residential Construction Show**

Hanley Wood Exhibitions\*  
Providence, R.I.  
800/261-7769  
[www.jlclive.com](http://www.jlclive.com)

\*Hanley Wood Exhibitions is owned by Hanley Wood, which also owns *Professional Deck Builder*.