



What is HT lumber?

HT STANDS FOR HEAT TREATMENT. There are three types of treatment approved for wood packaging materials items as part of ISPM 15. The most well-known, and the one in which NELMA is the most involved, is heat treatment.

Heat treatment requires that each solid wood component must be heated to a minimum of 56°C (133°F) for 30 minutes at the core of each piece. This is the established scientific temperature that will eliminate the dangerous pests that may be living within the wood material. Composite wood products such as plywood, particleboard, oriented strand board (OSB), flakeboard, and veneer are exempt from this standard due to the fact that high temperatures are used in their manufacturing process. Pressure-treated wood does not meet the standard *unless* the wood was heat-treated and stamped HT prior to preservative treatment.

NELMA facilities use more than 10 million bd. ft. annually in the construction of export wood packaging, with well over 100 million bd. ft. of use in this application annually nationwide.

How did the use of HT lumber begin?

Twenty years ago exactly, NELMA was one of the first U.S. agencies to obtain accreditation to create a Wood Packaging Inspection Program designed to provide services to companies that require the IPPC ISPM 15 certification, verification, and stamping of wood packaging used in export shipments.

What is the IPPC ISPM 15 Program?

In a nutshell, it applies to all manufacturers that produce export wood packaging such as pallets, crates, and boxes, or companies that box and ship or palletize their own products for foreign customers.

The longer version: the program—International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), International Standard for Phytosanitary Measures No. 15 (ISPM 15)—is an international plant health agreement that aims to protect cultivated and wild plants by preventing the introduction and spread of pests. The convention extends beyond the protection of cultivated plants to the protection of natural flora and plant products, which includes hardwood and softwood forests. It covers vehicles, aircraft, vessels, containers, storage places, and other objects or materials that can harbor or spread pests.

ISPM 15, titled Regulation of Wood Packaging

Material in International Trade, has been adopted by more than 150 countries to reduce the phytosanitary concerns related to growing global trade and the significant spread of pests through these solid wood packaging materials.

What are wood packaging materials?

Wood packaging materials (WPM) are defined as shipping units constructed completely or partially of solid wood materials such as pallets, skids, boxes, crates, reels, etc., in addition to individual pieces utilized for blocking and bracing cargo in a shipping container for securing the shipment while in transport.

Why HT matters to retailers

Wood packaging facilities, many of which buy lumber from retailers to produce export wood packaging materials, often must return their purchase because it doesn't contain the proper HT mark: the mark is either completely missing, or the proper one isn't shown. The HT mark may be embedded within a grade stamp on the lumber or placed separately on the piece.

With the advent of foreign lumber coming into the U.S., the wood is especially prone to not have the proper HT mark because the originating mill either isn't part of the U.S.-recognized HT verification program, or perhaps the proper mark just isn't shown. If the HT mark isn't present on each and every piece, the lumber cannot be used in the manufacturing of wood packaging for export. Period. The wood must be returned to their supplier!

Protect yourself from callbacks

To eliminate these customer complaints and potential loss of sales, lumber retailers should (1) communicate with their suppliers, whether it's a wholesaler or a lumber mill, that they wish to purchase lumber stamped with an HT on each piece; and (2) upon the lumber's arrival at the retailer, check the lumber for the proper mark prior to transporting it to an export wood packaging customer. A successful conclusion for all!

While global regulations, overall, aren't always a good thing—this is one of the few that's not only good, but a necessity. The purpose of this program is to reduce the number of invasive pests transferred between countries that can devastate our forests. Lumber retailers play an important supply chain role in the overall process!

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