

5 QUESTIONS WITH KIM MERRITT

A SPECIAL SERIES FROM **NELMA**

BY JEFF EASTERLING

Who are you, and what do you/your company do?

My name is Kim Merritt, and I am the director of the SPIB (Southern Pine Inspection Bureau) Treated Division and its Western Division, Western Wood Services (WWS). Our Treated Wood Quality Audit Programs provide third-party inspection services to help treated wood producers meet industry-approved standards. I also manage the SPIB Chemical Laboratory, which supports the wood products industry through our quality control analytical services, participating in standardization activities, training in good laboratory practices, and performing research and product evaluation testing.



The SPIB has a long history of over 100 years. In 1915, the Southern Pine Association was formed to provide a common set of grading standards for the Southern Pine lumber industry. Eventually, the SPA was divided into two organizations: the Southern Forest Products Association and the Southern Pine Inspection Bureau. Since 1941, the SPIB, a not-for-profit organization, has provided grade-marking inspection services and maintained the grading rules for the southern pine lumber industry.

What is the No. 1 challenge you see in the lumber industry today?

CHANGE. No one likes to change. Well, like it or not, our industry is changing. Preservative systems are evolving, plant laboratories are now required to perform more complex testing, and we should always be committed to improving our product evaluation.

Our industry is old, and our greatest challenge in quality control is to break the paradigm of doing things the same way because that is "how we've always done it!"

What's the No. 1 thing retailers need to know about treated wood?

At the risk of sounding like the Saturday morning cartoon *School House Rock*, "Knowledge is Power!"

Treated wood must be used in the proper application. I encourage retailers, as they have the closest contact with the consumer, to be informed and committed to empow-

ering the users of our products with the knowledge they need to use the right treated wood in the proper application.

Any tips for retailers selling treated wood?

A wealth of information and educational resources are available to building material dealers and retailers, code officials, specifiers, homeowners, and all users of treated wood! The American Wood Protection Association (www.awpa.com) has an entire section of its website dedicated to providing technical and educational materials regarding treated wood standards and the proper use of treated wood. These materials include a residential infographic that helps consumers understand treated wood labels and select the right preserved wood for their specific project.

Many other industry support organizations are dedicated to educating the public, such as SFPA (www.southernpine.com), Western Wood Preservers Institute (preservedwood.org), third-party inspection agencies, chemical manufacturers as well as the producers of treated wood. Here's where I get on my soapbox and encourage everyone to take advantage of these organizations and use their support to inform and guide consumers—it will set up treated wood producers, distributors, and users for continued success and sustainability!

What trends in lumber/pine industry are you seeing?

It is an exciting time for me! From my perspective, I see a tremendous movement towards approaching quality control as a team. I'm incredibly proud of the partnerships between SPIB and our subscribers. SPIB subscribers are passionate about producing quality products and value the information SPIB provides to achieve their quality vision. This aspect of my job is what I enjoy the most.

The training, the sharing of data with our innovative web-based tools (Data Connection), and working together with our customers to ensure that, with hard work and dedication, the SPIB mark is and will always will be a symbol of quality! **BP**

- For more information on the SPIB, please visit spib.org.