



Important Information for Your Business and Your Customers

Availability of F7 Pine, Treated and Untreated

June 2006

F7 visually stress-graded structural products have been supplied to the market for many years, often in larger section sizes and are regularly sold 'treated' for external use in domestic decks and pergolas. Some of these timber products may be finger-jointed or laminated.

Historically, most of these products have been visually graded to Australian timber grading standards with appearance overrides typically applied to meet individual producer company marketing needs. Visual grading of structural timber products is the traditional system of grading where visual characteristics such as knots, gum veins and other features of the timber determine the structural grade. This structural grade then determines the strength rating of the timber, for example F5 or F7 grade, as well as the properties of the timber used for span tables and structural design.

Recently, some companies have tested these visually-graded products for their compliance with Australian Standards and have found that the structural properties of the tested timber may not have been in compliance with the properties assumed from the visual grade assigned. The reason for this may include changes in the age and character of the current plantation pine resource compared to that tested in the early 1960's. This situation has led to a general examination of visually graded structural products both in Australia and overseas and has resulted in many cases to a change in verification procedures and to the available grades of visually-graded timber. Some companies have elected to supply mechanically stress-graded timber such as MGP10.

While F7 visually graded treated pine will still be available from some producers, alternative grades will become more commonly available. Grades that may be available will include F5, F7 and MGP10 and recent surveying of producers and distributors has indicated that the greatest volume and biggest size range will be available in visually graded F5. Nevertheless, merchants should check with their timber supplier to determine the grades that will be available in the future.

At the heart of the concerns of timber producers is the structural integrity of the timber – its fitness for purpose and its safe use in service as well as the necessity

to accurately describe and label the product for the market. **This last point cannot be over-emphasised** as there are severe penalties for companies and individuals that mis-represent the products they are selling.

It is critical, therefore, that you have confidence in the grades of timber that you are buying and selling and that the timber is accurately described, displayed and invoiced. Your customers should be made aware that the availability of grades is changing and that they need to ensure the timber is correctly specified and used. To help in this transition an explanatory notice has been prepared for your customers as well as span tables – please see attached. A change in loading standards means that for external decks, F5 graded timber may span a similar distance to F7 using the old loading (see the example in the box). More information is contained in the attached span table document. All other span tables will remain as described in the Timber Framing Code: AS 1684, Residential Timber-Framed Construction Standard.

Impact of New Loading Code on Timber Spans

The 2002 version of the Australian Loading Standard (AS/NZS 1170.1, 2002) has reduced imposed loading for balconies and decks. One impact of this is a change to joist sizes required.

Using the old 1989 loading code, for a 3600 span, joists would need to be either:

- F5 240x45 or
- F7 190x45

But when using the new 2002 Loading Code, with the same span, (3600) joists could be:

- F5 190x45, or
- F7 190x45

These spans are for floor joists in decks at or above 1m from the ground

For Your Customers:

1. Let them know that there will be a change to the grade availability of timber in the structural outdoor treated category and that the most commonly available grade will be F5.
2. Hand them the attached explanation and span table documents and ask them to ensure that they specify and use the correct grade of timber in their jobs.

3. Let them know that the timber they will be supplied will look very similar to what they have been supplied in the past.
4. Make sure they know that general framing timber is not affected by these changes which are relevant for external structural applications and other limited applications such as internal floor joists.

For the Merchant:

1. Talk to your supplier about the grades they will be supplying (including finger-jointed and laminated products) and make sure you get documentation that confirms the grade of timber.
2. Update your computer systems to include the grade you will be supplying. If you may be selling a number of grades, consider entering the lowest grade.
3. Ensure that your invoicing shows clearly the grade you are supplying.
4. Update the rack labelling.
5. Make sure your staff are aware of the changes and have information available to assist the builder.
6. Again, make sure your customers are aware of the changes. Consider sending information with your invoicing , newsletters and web-sites.

The timber industry remains fully committed to supplying a range of products that are well suited to the numerous end use applications in building and to the on-going support of these products in the market place.

For further information visit:

www.timber.net.au

www.nztif.co.nz

www.pine.net.nz