

WHITEMAN LUMBER CO.

THE OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY RUNNING SAWMILL IN IDAHO

SUMMER/FALL 2010 NEWSLETTER



What it Means for a Timber to be Dry

There is a lot being said today about what it means for a timber to be dry. There are even several trademarks out there referring to dry timbers. I feel that there needs to be some clarification.

The industry standard for dry wood is 19%. It is possible to dry wood further and sometimes it is necessary especially for products like flooring and paneling.

For timbers, extreme drying is not always necessary and often not the best idea.



According to the USDA and the Forest Products Laboratory the sapwood moisture content in a freshly cut coastal Douglas-fir is 115% and the moisture content in the heartwood of the same tree is 37%. It is easy to see that the vast majority of the moisture in a Douglas-fir is in the sap wood. If the sapwood is dry then the heartwood is most certainly dry.

Every timber is pre-destined to cure and move in a particular manner. The primary factors that influence this movement include the elevation where the tree was growing, prevailing winds, slope of the growing site and moisture. The stress in the tree that develops from these factors is what is released as the timber cures causing it to check and twist. Some of this movement can be predicted after looking at the end of the log and seeing if the pith is off center. This will indicate that the tree was growing in some sort of stressful situation. We grade our logs with this in mind so we are assured of getting the best possible timber. We then dry them in a de-humidification kiln at a maximum temperature of 135 degrees. We can actually see the water flowing out of the kiln. Our gauges and the water flow tell us when the drying process is coming to an end, usually 7 to 10 days depending on the time of year.

If we are sending a timber to somewhere like the upper Midwest we dry to 19%. If the wood is going to Arizona we dry to maybe 14% because the climate is so arid. One thing is for certain, if a timber that has been dried to 12% is compared with a timber that has been dried to 19% in the same home, within six months they both will have the same moisture content which will be reflective of whatever the ambient humidity is.

One more thing. Free of Heart Center does not guarantee no checking or twisting. Boxed Heart timbers will have one face that checks to the center of the timber, however, no one can predict how wide the check will be. We can provide FOHC in thicknesses up to six inches but in reality this results in little more than added expense for the homeowner. There needs to be an extreme amount of checking before there is a grade reduction. Also, standing dead timber is not necessarily dry. Douglas-fir timber that has been standing dead for two years with the bark on is guaranteed to have saprot, a severe problem.

Here at Whiteman Lumber we have a saying, "We sell the way a timber looks as much as we sell what it does". Give us a try.

WE SELL THE WAY A TIMBER LOOKS
AS MUCH AS WE SELL WHAT IT DOES.
GIVE US A TRY!

Contact Us: Email us at bradcorkill@whitemanlumber.com or call 877-682-4602