Burning treated wood releases toxins

Burning wood treated with Copper, Chromium and Arsenic (CCA) or tanalised timber is particularly bad as it will release arsenic into the air and into your home.

What is bad to burn?
- CCA treated wood for outdoor use, such as fencing or decking, outdoor furniture or cladding
- Any wood product with a coating, such as melamine or formica
- Painted, stained or varnished wood
- MDF or custom wood, chip board or plywood (these contain glues and binding agents)
What is CCA?
CCA or chromated copper arsenate is a wood preservative that is used mostly for wood that is exposed to the outdoors.

What happens when CCA treated wood is burned?
Poisonous chemicals are released into the air and affect people and the environment. Arsenic can also build up in the ash and be breathed in or contaminate the disposal area.

What are the health risks?
Long-term exposure to airborne arsenic may increase the risk of lung cancer.

How do I know if timber is CCA treated?
It can be difficult to tell. Most timber that is used outside is treated with arsenic. It can have a green stain, but sometimes this is difficult to see if the timber is old or weathered.

Can I burn treated timber in an enclosed fireplace or wood burner?
No. Arsenic and other chemicals are released into the environment and the home when loading or cleaning enclosed fires. Burning CCA treated timber is banned.

How do I dispose of off-cuts?
All treated, coated or manufactured wood products should be taken to the landfill or recycling centre to be disposed of.

What timber can I burn?
The safest timber to use in your fireplace or BBQ is natural 100% untreated wood.

However, some building materials are safe to burn. Ask your building supplies specialist how the timber has been treated when you purchase it.

If in doubt, throw it out!