

THE AMERICAN LUMBER STANDARD SYSTEM

The American Lumber Standard system is an integral part of the forest product industry's economy and is the basis for the sale and purchase of virtually all softwood lumber traded in North America. The American Lumber Standard system also provides the basis for acceptance of lumber and lumber design values by the building codes and other government agencies throughout the U.S.

Lumber labeling is one area where public safety and health in the use of that product is dependent upon industry self-regulation (not the Federal government). In fact, the symbiotic relationship between the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense and Justice and the lumber industry is an outstanding example of how well a program can work.

Few regulatory responsibilities anywhere have the luxury of a standardization procedure that so specifically relies upon representative consensus in its judgments, with layers of oversight, monitoring, correction and appeal—all integral parts of the process.

It is surprising that many members of the industry do not understand the significance of standards, certification and accreditation to our industry. Initial efforts to standardize lumber began in 1922 with the first standard being published in 1924. In 1941 the National Lumber Manufacturers Association (NLMA)-- now American Forest and Paper Association -- entered into a consent decree with the U.S. District Court. The decree required NLMA to create an impartial agency to oversee the standardization, certification and accreditation for softwood lumber. In 1953 the court found the American Lumber Standard Committee (ALSC), appointed by the Department of Commerce, and its Board of Review were impartial bodies appropriate to carry out the decree. Today the ALSC continues to operate under the consent decree and the Voluntary Product Standard system of the Department of Commerce. The appointed members of the ALSC represent lumber manufacturers, rules writing and inspection agencies, lumber wholesalers and retailers, engineers, architects, building code officials, home builders, secondary lumber manufacturers, government officials, and consumers. This wide range of representation is what ensures the consensus nature of ALSC decisions.

The ALS system as a whole is set up to give manufacturers, distributors, users and consumers a mechanism to continue to formulate and implement the standards under which softwood lumber is produced and specified. Each segment of the industry's participation is an integral part of the program and provides the industry with a direct voice in the standardization and accreditation program as it evolves.

American Softwood Lumber Standard

One of the functions of the ALSC is to keep the *American Softwood Lumber Standard (PS 20)* up to date. PS 20 establishes sizes, green/dry relationships, methods of assigning design values, industry nomenclature and labeling, inspection provisions, re-inspection provisions and enforcement regulations for the accreditation program. It is the standard used by the rules-writing agencies to write rules and calculate design values for the various species. The ALSC also elects the Board of Review which accredits and monitors agencies and certifies grading rules as complying with PS 20. This process provides public disclosure through a consensus procedure for

any proposed changes to agency grade rules. Six North American rules writing agencies and 20 inspection agencies are accredited and monitored by the Board of Review. These agencies oversee grading and labeling at approximately 900 mills in over 15 countries, which produce approximately 98 percent of the softwood lumber consumed in the United States.

Consolidations of forest products manufacturers, new lumber product technology, coupled with ever-growing concerns for public safety, demand the highest levels of lumber product labeling.

To achieve that, every building code and many specifiers recognize only those lumber inspection agencies which are accredited under the ALSC consensus process or those with equivalent features.

With full participation from all segments of the industry (manufacturers, specifiers and users) the American Lumber Standard system continues to be dynamic and continues to evolve to meet the requirements of all and to give consumers continued assurance that lumber labeled under the ALSC meets their needs.

National Grading Rule for Dimension Lumber

An important component of the ALS system is the National Grading Rule Committee (NGRC). This Committee's responsibility is to write the National Grading Rule (NGR) and to make changes in it as the needs of manufacturers and consumers evolve. The NGR applies to all species of dimension lumber (2-4" thick, 2" and wider) listed in accredited agencies rules. The familiar dimension grades of Select Structural, No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, Stud, Construction, Standard and Utility constitute the NGR. Lumber manufactured under the NGR accounts for the primary framing material used in residential construction in North America.

Treated Wood Program

In 1992 the ALSC began monitoring the performance of agencies which audit the preservative treatment of lumber by treating plants under the American Wood Protection Association standards. The ALSC established and maintains the Treated Wood Policy and Treated Wood Enforcement Regulations. The Board of Review accredits and monitors three agencies which oversee approximately 100 treating facilities in North America. These plants produce roughly 33 percent of the treated wood consumed in the U.S.

Wood Packaging Material Program

In 2001 the ALSC entered into a memorandum of understanding with the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), to monitor agencies that audit wood packaging material (crates, pallets, etc.) manufactured for international trade under the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) International Standards for

Phytosanitary Measures – *Guidelines for Regulating Wood Packaging Material in International Trade*. The ALSC contributed to the writing of this Standard. The ALSC keeps current the Wood Packaging Material Policy and the Wood Packaging Material Enforcement Regulations. Eighteen agencies are accredited to provide this service to approximately 5,500 facilities in the U.S. that produce heat treated or fumigated wood packaging material destined for export to the European Union and other markets.

Densified Fuel Pellets Program

In 2012 the ALSC began a program to monitor the performance of agencies supervising the labeling of residential/commercial densified fuel pellets produced by pellet manufacturers under the requirements of the Pellet Fuels Institute (PFI) Standard Specification for residential/Commercial Densified Fuel; the PFI Residential/Commercial Densified Fuel QA/QC Handbook and ALSC policies and procedures. The BOR discharges this function by accrediting those agencies and monitoring their performance