

Southern Pine Blue Stain Examples



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Blue stain fungus penetration in Southern Pine log cross-section



Clemson University - USDA Cooperative Extension



Blue-stained Southern Pine lumber



SFPA is a nonprofit trade association that has represented manufacturers of Southern Pine lumber since 1915.

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SFPA #275 3-12

BLUED PINE

Don't Be
BLUE

About
Blue-Stained
Southern Pine
Lumber



What makes the lumber blue?

Blue stain is a common cause for the discoloration of lumber. Certain dark colored microscopic fungi cause a bluish or grayish discoloration in the sapwood of the tree. However, not all blue stains are blue. Common stain shades can be blue to bluish black or gray to brown. Sometimes, the stain coloration in lumber may appear as red, yellow, orange, or purple.

Does it affect the strength properties?

Blue stain has no effect on the performance and strength of lumber. Structural lumber is not downgraded due to the presence of blue stain and should not be labeled inferior lumber.

Where can blue-stained lumber be used?

Because blue stain does not detract from the strength properties of dimension lumber, blue-stained lumber can be used for exactly the same purpose as nonstained lumber. Just be certain that the lumber has a grade mark accredited by the American Lumber Standard Committee (ALSC), which includes the grade, moisture content, inspection service, species, and mill identification number.

What is it... blue stain or mold?

Blue stain is not mold. However, for a simple test to determine whether or not a piece of lumber is blue stained or has mold, lightly rub the affected surface of the wood. Mold grows on the surface and can be brushed off or smeared, whereas blue stain penetrates deep into the wood and cannot be removed.

What about health and safety concerns?

Blue stain poses no health risk, and blue-stained lumber is safe to handle. The same safety rules for using non-stained lumber apply to blue-stained lumber:

- Wear eye protection and a dust mask when sawing or machining lumber.
- Avoid prolonged inhalation of sawdust.
- When the work is completed, wash areas of skin contact thoroughly before eating or drinking.
- Wash clothing that accumulates sawdust separately from other household clothing and before reuse.

Does blue stain cause decay?

Blue stain is not a decay fungi. Blue stain fungi live on the nutrients stored in the cells of the wood, not on the cellulose fibers of the tree itself.

When might I see more stained lumber?

A larger proportion of blue-stained lumber is likely to enter Southern Pine lumber markets after natural disasters that damage forest resources. Timber salvage operations following natural disasters are more challenging and typically affect a large geographic area. Consequently, it may take longer for trees to be brought to the sawmill for processing into lumber. Downed timber may begin to show signs of blue stain in as early as five days in warm, humid weather. This explains why more natural discoloration occurs in lumber manufactured from salvaged timber following major hurricanes.

Can stained lumber be pressure treated?

Blue stain fungi have no effect on the treatability of Southern Pine lumber and stained lumber may be treated to guard against decay and termites.

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