

What is ISPM 15?

Quarantine pests found in wood packaging (pallets, crates, spools, dunnage, etc.) present a significant threat to forest health worldwide. Pests that are native to the forests in one region of the world may not be native to the forests in another region. When pests are introduced into a forest ecosystem where they are non-native, it can have a significant effect on forest health and biodiversity.

The International Standard for Phytosanitary Measure No. 15 (ISPM 15), [“Regulation of Wood Packaging Material in International Trade”](#) is an international standard that was developed to help reduce the spread of wood-borne pests in solid wood packaging materials. ISPM 15 is written and controlled by the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). The IPPC is a part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Currently there are over 100 countries that require imported wood packaging to be ISPM 15 compliant and more countries are expected to adopt this measure in the future.

Products Covered by ISPM 15

Examples of wood packaging materials (WPM) commonly certified under ISPM 15 include: pallets, boxes, crates, spools and dunnage. However, WPM can take many shapes and forms when used to support or transport a commodity to its final destination.

WPM items produced entirely of reconstituted wood products (i.e. plywood, oriented strand board) are exempt from this standard. Only the raw lumber present in the WPM is required to meet the requirements of ISPM 15.

Treatment Methods

The current version of ISPM 15 recognizes two treatment measures for wood packaging: fumigation and heat treatment (HT).

Heat Treatment

Heat treatment is the most common method used by manufacturers to meet ISPM 15 WPM regulations. Lumber is considered heat treated when core temperature of 133°F (56°C) has been maintained for 30 consecutive minutes. An “HT” on the lumber grade stamp is a common way for mills to indicate lumber has been through the HT process.

Fumigation

Less common than heat treatment, methyl bromide fumigation is another accepted ISPM 15 treatment. WPM treated by this method will bear an IPPC mark containing “MB” rather than “HT.” Examples where fumigation might be a good option include: last minute treatments (in the country of origin, in-transit on the ship, or in the port of the destination country) and treatments of especially large or complex wood packaging material that cannot easily or practically be heated in a chamber to the required temperature.

Wood Packaging Labeling Under ISPM 15

Wood packaging shipped to any country that has adopted ISPM 15 must be labeled with either the IPPC HT mark or the IPPC MB mark. Shipments that enter ports without the certification mark can be detained and fumigated and/or the shipment may be refused and sent back to the port of origin or destroyed, all at the shipper’s expense.