

## **NEW SP GRADES FOR STRUCTURAL PINE**

Following the previous A3P Board decision to develop and promote a new set of four grades for structural pine products the A3P Board ratified, at its meeting on 1 March 2006, the design properties and associated design values for the new grades which are to be designated SP1, SP2, SP3 and SP4.

Whilst some companies may elect to maintain production of MGP grades it is expected that most producers will move to the new grades when the key elements of the SP grade framework are in place. The target date for this is 1 August 2006.

Production of the new SP grades will rely on the finalisation of an A3P industry standard and upgraded quality assurance procedures flowing from the research projects conducted via FWPRDC over the past two years.

The SP grades have been specifically positioned to meet market needs in terms of end-use application requirements, from engineered wood products through to lower end general framing. The needs of the Truss and Frame industry have been taken into account in particular and the input of this industry has been invaluable. As a result of this, SP grades other than SP4 will have a production control aimed at reducing stiffness variability – a key concern of the Truss and Frame industry. This is a significant development compared to previous grading systems.

Further there will be a marking requirement for SP grades whereby all SP graded sticks will carry grade marking at intervals not exceeding 1200mm spacings along the length of the timber. This requirement has been included in response to market needs as there has been considerable market place confusion in recent years.

A Technology Transfer Plan (TTP) is already underway with span tables for the new grades generated and work currently in hand to convert this information to AS1684 (Residential Timber Framing Standard) compatible table format. This is a large task with tables required for 4 new grades and six design wind speeds with the total number of tables around 1300. It is planned that these will be available in electronic (web and CD) and abbreviated hard copy format.

The TTP also includes the production of other resource materials including the brochures and presentations that will provide the basis for seminars to be conducted around Australia. These events will be targeted at specific audiences, supply chain to market. A workshop will also be conducted for production personnel so that quality assurance procedures will be understood before the new grades are made available to the market.

Initial details of the SP grades program will be provided to truss and frame and building industry delegates at the Frame Australia Conference at the end of May 2006.

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