



## A3P INFORMATION BULLETIN

# AVAILABILITY OF VISUALLY STRESS GRADED STRUCTURAL SOFTWOOD

**Issued April 2007**

The Australian market was supplied with visually stress-graded structural softwood products for many years before the introduction of the mechanically stress-graded softwood products that now constitute the bulk of the total structural softwood production volume.

Visually stress graded softwood products such as F7 treated pine, F5 'Visual' and F5 'Heart-in' studs have continued to be available from producers based upon historical supply, market acceptability and performance.

### **What is going on in the structural softwood industry?**

Over the past few years there has been increasing pressure on producers of structural timber with respect to ensuring grade compliance. The technical, regulatory and legal framework within which a producer must operate is demanding and the cost of compliance with relevant standards and associated quality assurance processes is significant.

The producers of all structural products need to ensure those products are suitable for the intended application and they need to have appropriate quality assurance processes in place to achieve this outcome. To satisfy these requirements most producers of mechanically stress-graded products would prefer the more robust structural property monitoring and verification processes that they already have built in to the manufacturing process for these products.

### **What does this mean to timber suppliers and users?**

For a supplier this means that the availability of some visually stress-graded products may change as the producers of these products evaluate an appropriate response to addressing standards compliance responsibilities. For designers, specifiers, builders and other users of structural timber products this means checking with the supplier to ensure the product normally used remains available and, if not, to liaise with the supplier to determine the most suitable alternative product for the purpose.

There are many timber products available, in a range of species and stress grades, and there is supporting information, such as the span tables in AS1684 Residential Timber Frame

Construction, company literature, commercial software etc that will facilitate the use of any available structural timber in a range of stress grades.

### Likely changes – examples

#### Reduced availability of visually graded F7

F7 visually stress-graded structural products have been supplied to the market for many years, often in larger section sizes to suit applications such as joists and rafters. They are regularly sold 'treated' for external use in domestic decks and pergolas. Historically, most of these products have been visually graded to AS2858 with appearance overrides typically applied to meet individual producer company marketing needs. While F7 visually graded treated pine will still be available from some producers, the increasing emphasis on grade compliance and verification may mean other producers will look to move to alternatives. These may include visually or mechanically stress-graded F5, and mechanically stress-graded F7, MGP10 or MGP12. Any of these options may be available with or without an appearance override.

#### Decreased availability of visually graded F5 'Heart-in' and F5 'Visual'

F5 'Heart-in' material has been provided as a lower cost wall stud solution for many years. F5 'Visual' has also been supplied to meet market demand. Some builders have sought this material in preference to other alternatives and whilst there will be producers who will no doubt continue to supply these products it is anticipated that their overall availability will diminish in time. This is because the cost of responding to ongoing compliance requirements may make these products commercially unsustainable for some producers. Individual producers will make their own decisions on these matters and should be consulted if further information is required. Alternative softwood products are Mechanically Stress Graded F5 and MGP10 grades.

### Industry responsibility

A3P recommends that all parties involved in the sale of structural timber products ensure that their products comply with the relevant standards and that they are appropriately marked or labelled in accordance with the requirements of those standards.

Timber has unique advantages that make it a preferred building material. The plantation timber sector recognises that its products are especially valued for their cost effectiveness, practical application and significant environmental benefits in comparison to alternative building materials.

***The industry remains fully committed to supplying a range of products that are well suited to the numerous end use applications in building and to the on-going support of these products in the market place.***

Further information: [www.a3p.asn.au](http://www.a3p.asn.au) or contact A3P (02) 6283 111

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