TECHNICAL NOTE NUMBER F-15
FOREST PRODUCTS LABORATORY - U. S. FOREST SERVICE - MADISON, WISCONSIN

EFFECT OF TIME OF CUTTING TIMBER ON ITS DURABILITY

Many of the theories which have been advanced regarding the durability of wood attribute too much importance to the time of cutting. As a matter of fact, the time of cutting has very little effect upon the durability or other properties if the timber is properly cared for after it is cut. The method of handling posts, poles, and logs at different times of the year, however, does influence their durability.

Late Spring and Summer Cutting

Posts, poles, and other rough products cut in late spring and early summer are more likely to be attacked by insects and fungi because the wood is freshly cut and in the most favorable condition for attack at a time when insects and the spores of fungi are most active. Seasoning also proceeds more rapidly during the warmer months and may cause excessive checking. If the wood is peeled when cut and piled openly on skids for seasoning opportunity for decay will be reduced to a minimum, but checking will not be retarded. In no case should the wood be allowed to lie in direct contact with the ground. If checking is an important consideration it can be reduced somewhat by locating the piles in a shaded but dry place. The bark peels most easily in spring. It can be removed at any other time of the year but the labor and expense will probably be greater.

Fall and Winter Cutting

Timber cut in late fall and winter seasons more slowly and with less checking than during the warmer months. When proper storage or handling is impracti-

cable, winter cutting is best. Fungi and insects do not attack wood out of doors in cold weather, and by the time warm weather arrives the wood is partly seasoned and somewhat less susceptible to attack. It is for this reason that winter cutting is advantageous and not on account of a smaller amount of moisture or sap in the wood in winter as the popular belief has it. There is practically no difference in moisture content of green wood in winter and summer.