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The Implications for North American Exporters of Softwood Lumber Stress Grading in Europe with Particular Emphasis on British Stress Grades and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Stress Grades

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of an investigation into softwood lumber grading systems used in Europe with an emphasis on systems used, or proposed, for international trade transactions. The report also presents comparisons and approximate cross-references of these systems with North American grades. This involves the use of previously published comparisons as well as new material developed during the course of this study. The study also briefly examines the nature of the European softwood lumber market and its future prospects. The information presented in this study represents a step in the direction of improving the North American manufacturer's understanding of Europe.

The information contained in this report relied principally on a search of available literature in the University of Washington Library system, reports sent in response to out letters to various European testing and research organizations, and conversations with representatives of the American Plywood Association and Western Wood Products Association. Consequently, interpretations regarding historical background and current status of lumber grading practices in Europe may be limited by not having the opportunity to observe practices first hand or to converse with firms heavily involved in European trade. It is believed that the information contained in this report is a fairly accurate description of major events and combined with the grade cross-reference will be useful to North American producers.

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