

Resawing Treated Lumber: Demolition Derby



A I recently (4 months?) ago purchased one of your 1/2" Wood Slicer band saw blades in a 105" in length for my Rockwell 14" band saw w/ 6" riser kit (3/4 H.P. wired for 220V). I also purchased the Iturra spring and Quik-Crank handle. While I installed the spring and handle almost immediately, I did not use the blade until today when I tried to re-saw some 4' long sections of 2" X 6" treated southern yellow pine into 3/4" planks that I wanted to ultimately plane to 9/16". The first 5 or 6 feet went great, the next 5 feet were good, then the last 5 feet were slow and I barely got through the last board. Your [web] site suggested that the blade may clog quickly and to clean the blade – I tried this to no avail. Also, while I realize treated southern yellow pine might cause the blade to dull, this particular wood has been sitting in a pile beside my woodshop for 5 or so years and is not “wet” by any stretch of the imagination.

Is the saw not powerful enough for re-sawing 5-1/2" of a resinous wood? Should I re-wire the motor for 110V? This particular band saw also has a gear box for metal cutting – should I gear it down to overcome the over-loading problems, or would the blade speeds be too slow? Did the treated SYP dull the blade that quickly? Any suggestions or comments? Thanks for any help you can shed on this problem.

Q Resawing yellow pine, treated pine at that, is a guaranteed prescription for trouble. Resawing fifteen lineal feet of 6" pine is more than enough to foul the blade with a gluey mixture of resin and dust, which can degrade performance with dismaying speed. It is relatively easy to scour the blade clean frequently, but if cutting continues until the saw stalls out, the accumulated crud will have been heated, hardened, and baked onto the blade so thoroughly that casual cleaning is of little avail. Further, the minerals deposited throughout the wood during pressure treatment confront the blade with a challenge similar to cutting through sandpaper, and it will not be surprising to document dulling of the teeth after only fifteen feet of sawing.

First, we need to find out if your Wood Slicer's teeth have been damaged. Use Blade & Bit cleaner (or, lacking a non-caustic product, use oven cleaner) to clean off a dozen teeth or so. Your fingertips will tell you reliably if the blade is generally sharp or not. If the tooth tips don't grab your fingers aggressively, then some amount of dulling has surely taken place. Light the cleaned teeth very brightly and look at them closely, preferably with a magnifier. I use an 8x slide loupe, purchased at a camera store, for all manner of inspection chores. If the tips of your blade's teeth are shiny, they're rounded and dull. Under close examination, the tips might be clearly abraded, scored and flattened by the minerals in the wood. If so, there's unfortunately not much point in cleaning the rest of the blade; it's shot.

On the other hand, if the teeth are sharp or only slightly worn, it's worth cleaning the rest of the blade and putting it back to work -- on something other than pressure-treated pine. Sawing construction material with a Wood Slicer is sort of like entering a new Volvo in a demolition Derby. It may be a very good vehicle, but a junker would be a more practical choice. When you need to cut treated lumber, use an ordinary (relatively inexpensive) 1/2", 3 tpi blade. Frequent cleaning is as much a necessity as ever, but when the material eventually ruins the blade, at least the cost per sawn foot remains bearable. If possible, save your Wood Slicer for resawing lumber whose value justifies using a premium blade.

Zach Etheridge