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Advancements and Applications of One-Component Polyurethane Adhesive in Timber Engineering: A Mini Review

Narges Gray[1], Younes Shirmohammadli[2]* and Masood Sarajieh[1]

[1]Department of Wood and Paper Science and Technology, Faculty of Natural Resources, University of Tehran, Iran

[2]Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, The University of Auckland, New Zealand

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***Corresponding author:** Younes Shirmohammadli, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, The University of Auckland, Private bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand

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Abstract

Timber, an enduring symbol of sustainability and architectural versatility, has undergone a remarkable renaissance in contemporary construction practices. This resurgence has been catalyzed by the evolution of adhesive technologies, particularly the ascendancy of one-component polyurethane adhesive systems. These adhesive formulations, characterized by their diverse bonding capabilities, ease of application and multifaceted advantages within timber-related applications, have revolutionized the landscape of structural engineering. This succinct review meticulously dissects the multifaceted properties, expansive applications, nuanced challenges, and evolutionary trajectories of one-component polyurethane adhesives in the intricate tapestry of timber engineering. By delving deep into the underlying significance of these adhesives, this comprehensive exploration aims to elucidate their pivotal role in fortifying structural integrity, unlocking unprecedented performance thresholds and catalyzing transformative innovations in timber-based constructions.

Introduction

Timber, an enduring symbol of sustainability and architectural versatility has undergone a remarkable renaissance in contemporary construction practices. This resurgence has been catalyzed by the evolution of adhesive technologies, particularly the ascendancy of one-component polyurethane adhesive systems. The intrinsic attraction of timber as a sustainable, renewable construction material has stood the test of time, consistently weaving itself into the fabric of architectural and engineering marvels. Amidst this rich history, the role of bonding techniques has emerged as a cornerstone in leveraging the full potential of timber within the domain of structural engineering [1,2]. The advent of one-component polyurethane adhesive systems represents a seminal milestone in this journey, encapsulating intricate chemical compositions, refined curing mechanisms, and unparalleled bonding characteristics that redefine the standards of timber engineering [3].

The timber industry's historic relationship with bonding techniques finds its contemporary apex in the emergence of one-component polyurethane adhesive systems. These adhesive formulations represent more than a mere adhesive; they encapsulate a transformative approach to timber engineering, outlining a shift from conventional practices towards innovative methodologies that enhance structural resilience, versatility and longevity of timber-based constructions. The inherent synergy between the sustainability principles of timber and the adaptable chemistry of one-component polyurethane adhesives marks a convergence point, amplifying the potential of both components within the construction context.

Moreover, the evolution of these adhesive systems is not merely confined to a technologically driven narrative; it merges with an architectural and engineering narrative,

where the intrinsic qualities of timber as a building material converge with the adhesive's chemical and mechanical properties to open new frontiers in design freedom, structural efficiency, and environmental sustainability [4]. This synthesis of natural material and advanced technology represents a balanced collaboration between tradition and innovation, laying the groundwork for a new era in timber engineering.

Properties and Advantages

The symphony of properties orchestrated within one-component polyurethane adhesives embodies a diverse ensemble cast of attributes indispensable to the intricate fabric of timber engineering. This adhesive lineage, composed of meticulously balanced polyols, isocyanates, finely tuned additives and versatile modifiers, intricately weaves a tapestry of high bond strength, inherent flexibility and impervious resistance to the relentless encroachment of moisture [5]. The unique attribute of curing in the ambient presence of atmospheric moisture not only confers unparalleled versatility for on-site applications but also engenders robust bonding in the face of the most inhospitable environmental conditions. A comparative evaluation against traditional adhesive archetypes such as resorcinol and phenol-formaldehyde underscore the manifold advantages of polyurethane adhesives, delineating their augmented durability, expedited curing kinetics, and unfaltering bonding prowess across a myriad of timber substrates [6].

Applications in Timber Engineering

The polyphonic versatility exhibited by one-component polyurethane adhesives has orchestrated a symphony of applications within the intricate composition of timber engineering. Engineered wood products, comprising of glued laminated timber (glulam), laminated veneer lumber (LVL) and cross-laminated timber (CLT), stand as proofs to the indispensable role played by these adhesives in fortifying structural integrity and ensuring the continuity of performance benchmarks [7]. Furthermore, the innate ability of polyurethane adhesives to forge bonds across disparate materials has facilitated a renaissance in the realm of hybrid timber-based composite materials, thereby engendering an expansive canvas of design paradigms and pushing the envelope of innovation within the construction domain [8].

Moreover, these adhesives have been instrumental in improving the fire resistance and acoustic performance of timber structures, enhancing their viability in modern construction practices. Expanding further, the integration of one-component polyurethane adhesives extends beyond the conventional applications in glulam, LVL and CLT. Recent advancements have seen their robust implementation in novel timber-based structural configurations, including but not limited to timber-concrete composite structures, timber connections in high-rise buildings, and innovative truss systems.

In addition to structural applications, the adaptability of one-component polyurethane adhesives has fostered a revolution in functional and aesthetic aspects of timber engineering. Their utility in manufacturing prefabricated timber modules for modular construction, artistic timber assemblies in sculptural architecture and intricate timber joineries in heritage restoration projects illustrates the diverse tapestry of possibilities.

The ongoing exploration of these adhesives in timber engineering unveils potential applications in emerging domains such as tall timber buildings with innovative load-bearing systems, eco-friendly timber-based transportation structures and sustainable timber-clad facades. This progressive trajectory signifies the expanding horizons where one-component polyurethane adhesives continue to be at the leading position of transformative advancements in timber engineering.

Navigating Challenges in Timber Engineering: Optimizing One-Component Polyurethane Adhesives for Stronger Bonds

One significant disadvantage of one-component polyurethane adhesives in timber engineering is their sensitivity to moisture. Timber, being a natural material, can contain varying levels of moisture, which can affect the adhesive's curing process and overall bond strength. High moisture content in the wood can hinder the adhesive's ability to properly bond, leading to weakened joints or delamination over time. To address this, it's crucial to ensure that the timber's moisture content is within an acceptable range before applying the adhesive. Drying the wood or using moisture-resistant formulations of polyurethane adhesives can help mitigate this issue [9].

Another challenge is the limited working time or open time of one-component polyurethane adhesives. Once applied, these adhesives start to cure and form a bond relatively quickly, leaving a short window for assembly and adjustment of timber components. This limitation can be challenging when working on complex or large-scale timber projects that require precise alignment and ample time for assembly. To overcome this challenge, meticulous planning, efficient work processes, and utilizing adhesives with longer open times or employing fast-acting techniques during assembly become crucial [10].

Additionally, temperature sensitivity poses a challenge in using one-component polyurethane adhesives in timber engineering. Extreme temperatures, whether excessively high or low, can affect the adhesive's curing rate and final bond strength. Cold temperatures can significantly slow down the curing process, while high temperatures might accelerate it, potentially leading to improper bonding. Maintaining an optimal working temperature and using adhesives formulated to perform well in a range of temperatures can help mitigate this issue [11].

Bio-based one component polyurethane adhesives

In response to growing environmental concerns and the imperative to adopt more sustainable practices, there is an increasing necessity to transition from conventional products to biobased alternatives in various industries, including timber engineering [12]. Biobased one-component polyurethane adhesives have emerged as sustainable alternatives in timber engineering

applications, offering promising solutions that combine eco-friendliness with structural efficiency. Derived from renewable resources like plant-based oils or biomass, these adhesives address environmental concerns by reducing reliance on fossil fuels and minimizing the carbon footprint associated with traditional petroleum-based counterparts.

In timber engineering, these adhesives play a pivotal role in bonding wood components, facilitating the assembly of various structural elements such as beams, panels and laminates. Their superior bonding strength, moisture resistance and durability contribute to the integrity and longevity of timber structures while ensuring compliance with stringent industry standards.

Research indicates that biobased polyurethane adhesives exhibit commendable mechanical properties, comparable to or even surpassing those of conventional adhesives, making them suitable for demanding structural applications. Studies by researchers like Zhang et al. [13] and Pizzi et al. [14] emphasize the feasibility and efficacy of these adhesives in enhancing the performance and sustainability of timber products. The utilization of biobased one-component polyurethane adhesives aligns with the principles of green building and sustainable development, fostering a more environmentally conscious approach in the construction and timber engineering sectors.

Challenges and Future Directions

The ascent of one-component polyurethane adhesives in timber engineering, albeit resplendent with advantages, has been marked by a labyrinthine trajectory fraught with challenges. The trajectory of one-component polyurethane adhesives in timber engineering appears poised on the precipice of transformative evolution. The ceaseless pursuit of optimization in formulations, the ardor for environmental sustainability epitomized by the curtailment of VOC emissions, and the ceaseless quest for pioneering application methodologies stand as the beacon lighting the path toward augmented performance thresholds and an expansive embrace within the hallowed precincts of the construction sector.

Future Prospects

The integration of one-component polyurethane adhesive systems within the sprawling canvas of timber engineering represents not just an augmentation of structural prowess but an audacious stride toward alignment with sustainability imperatives by championing the cause of renewable materials in construction. The unfolding vista of these adhesives, poised on the cusp of enhanced durability, attenuated environmental footprint through the reduction of VOC emissions and an invigorated paradigm of cost-effectiveness, all converge to herald an epoch where their ubiquity within timber engineering is no longer an aspiration but an immutable reality.

Conclusion

The addition of one-component polyurethane adhesives to timber engineering marks a significant shift, going beyond just improving structures to fundamentally changing how timber-based constructions are built. These adhesives stand out for their strong bonding, adaptability across various uses, and exceptional ability to connect different materials, making them essential in modern construction.

To fully utilize their potential, addressing existing challenges and committing to continuous research is crucial. By embracing these adhesives as key elements in today's timber engineering, blending old practices with new ideas, creating more durable, sustainable, and resilient constructions. Their widespread use in construction underscores their significant impact, promising a future where timber engineering and these adaptable adhesives work hand in hand. This forward-thinking approach signifies an unwavering commitment to strengthening structures, unlocking innovative techniques, and upholding sustainability in construction practices. As these adhesives lead the way in advancing timber engineering, their lasting influence reshapes how we perceive modern constructions, emphasizing a strong connection between materials, technology, and sustainable methods.

In essence, the combination of their diverse properties and versatile applications solidifies their role as pivotal components in reinforcing timber-based constructions, paving the path for innovation and sustainability to merge in reshaping the architectural landscape.

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