Because of their size, timbers are usually cut from the center area of a log. Timbers cut from the very center of a tree (variously called the "pith," the "bullseye," or the "heart center") are generally less dimensionally stable and have a tendency to split, check, and twist more than timbers that do not contain this heart center of the tree. For this reason, the term "free of heart center" (FOHC) is sometimes used when selling and buying timbers. Buyers typically would like a high percentage of their timbers to be free of heart center, and so negotiate this, together with price, before the deal is completed. For example, someone might specify that an order for timbers contain "70% FOHC" or "85% FOHC." This means that 70% (or 85%) of the pieces in the shipment will not contain the pith of the log. Of course, the higher the FOHC required by the buyer, the higher the price, particularly on large sizes.

Question 4. What is the moisture content?

The wood in a growing tree contains a lot of moisture (mainly water). This water is used to move nutrients up, down, and around the tree. When a log is harvested and sawn into lumber, the wood still contains much of that moisture. As part of the conversion of the log into finished lumber, lumber is often (but not always) dried as one of the steps in the manufacturing process. This drying of the wood is done because lower moisture content affects lumber in several beneficial ways:

1. A lower moisture content means there is less water in the wood, which means that the lumber weighs less. Since transportation charges are frequently based on weight, lower moisture content means more lumber can be loaded onto a car, resulting in a lower freight charge and a lower delivered cost.

2. A lower moisture content means that lumber is less likely to develop stain, decay, mold, or insect problems. (Lumber will not develop stain below 19% moisture content.)

3. A lower moisture content makes wood more stable and more likely to stay straight and flat. It also helps prevent shrinkage and checking (end splitting) after the lumber is in use. These