

News from the Communications Workers of America

The Union for the Information Age

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For More Information

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CWA, Environmental Group Seek to Stop Use of Toxic Wood Preservatives

Washington, D.C. -- The Communications Workers of America has joined Beyond Pesticides, a leading environmental group, in a federal lawsuit to stop the continued use of the highly toxic wood preservatives chromated copper arsenate (CCA), pentachlorophenol (penta) and creosote. The suit was filed today in Federal District Court in Washington, D.C.

The Environmental Protection Agency has overwhelming data on the effects of these preservatives both on workers' health and the environment but has failed to act to safeguard the public, workers and the environment, the groups stated.

Of its more than 700,000 members, CWA represents some 25,000 workers who, through the course of their telephone repair, service and installation work, come into regular contact with utility poles that have been treated with these dangerous substances.

"Because of the EPA's failure to act, tens of thousands of workers are exposed daily to chemical wood preservatives that have debilitating effects on workers' long term health. This is a serious workplace issue that must be addressed," said CWA President Morton Bahr.

The three preservatives have been linked to a wide range of health problems, including cancers, birth defects, kidney and liver damage and neurological disorders.

In written comments and filings to the EPA, CWA stressed that the agency's plan for a partial phase-out of CCA will not adequately protect human health and the environment. CWA called on EPA to shorten its proposed phase-out period and cancel all uses of CCA, as well as address the greater portion of pesticide-treated wood entering the marketplace daily. The agency did not provide a substantive response to CWA's comments.

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