

How Does Your Utility Company Rate?

Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP Launches Effort to Evaluate Utilities, Pesticide Use and Policy

Wood preservatives used to treat millions of utility poles across the country pose a serious threat to public health and the environment. Wood preservatives constitute the single largest pesticide use in the United States. The chemicals, used widely to extend the life of wood products, including over 100 million utility poles, contain some of the most hazardous toxic contaminants on the market. The chemicals include pentachlorophenol, creosote, arsenic and chromium VI and contaminants such as dioxin, furan and hexachlorobenzene. According to the EPA, wood preservatives account for over one-third of all pesticide use. The sole purpose of these chemicals is to preserve wood by killing insects, bacteria and fungus.

Wood preservatives leave a toxic trail, which includes their production, wood treatment, installation of poles, transportation, storage and disposal. There are at least 795 wood preserving facilities across the country and hundreds of Superfund hazardous waste sites that are contaminated with wood preservatives. Treated poles continue to pollute after they are taken out of service and used as fence posts or other building material. Utility companies can adopt safer, cost competitive practices by using alternative pole materials such as steel, concrete and fiberglass.

Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP's Poison Poles Campaign began with the development and distribution of *Poison Poles: Their Toxic Trail and the Safer Alternatives* (For a copy, contact, Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP.) This report successfully

brought the issue of the widespread contamination and poisoning from the use of wood preservatives on utility poles and availability of alternatives in front of utility industry executives and decision-makers, consumer activists, utility regulators and the general public.

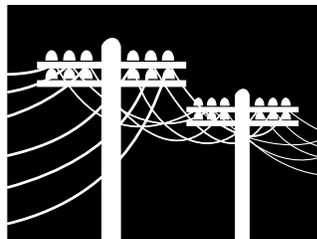
It will take an active public to push for the adoption of alternatives and a more aggressive regulatory climate to provide improved protection of public health and the environment.

In order to find out if your utility company uses environmentally responsible practices, Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP has developed a survey. The survey questions utility companies on their alternative materials and

practices in their distribution, pole replacement, expansion and retreatment programs. As a follow-up to Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP's report, *The Right Way to Vegetation Management: A Review of Selected Pest Management Policies and Programs on Rights-of-Way* (Pesticides and You, vol. 19, no. 1, 1999), the survey also has a question regarding the utility company's vegetation management policies along its rights-of-way.

WITH YOUR HELP we can survey all 3,013 utility companies in the country. Please send the following letter (or use it to write your own) and survey and send it to the Director or Environmental Manager of your local utility company. We will publish the results of the survey in a report that will be out later this year. The report will be disseminated to you, the media, and the utility companies, with a focus on how local utilities are evaluated and where improvement is needed.

It will take an active public to push for the adoption of alternatives and a more aggressive regulatory climate to provide improved protection of public health and the environment.



Let us know the name of the utility company you mailed to:

Name/Title: _____

Department: _____

Company: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Keep us in touch with you.

Your Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Please mail or fax this slip to Beyond Pesticides/NCAMP, 701 E Street SE, Suite 200, Washington DC, 20003, (202) 543-5450 voice, (202) 543-4791 fax or email us at ncamp@ncamp.org.

Dear Utility Company Official:

As a consumer, I am increasingly asking questions about the environmental policies and practices of the companies, including utility companies, with whom I do business. In an age of utility deregulation, these questions take on new importance in consumer purchasing decisions.

As a customer of your utility company, I feel that this is a critical time for me to ask your company a series of questions regarding utility pole materials, pole storage, retreatment, and disposal, as well as questions about your company's rights-of-way maintenance program. The National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP), a non-profit public interest organization, has developed the following survey to help me identify your practices and policies.

NCAMP, formed in 1981, was established as a clearinghouse on pesticides, providing the public with information on toxic hazards and safe strategies for pest management. In this context, NCAMP's organizational and individual members have developed a cooperative relationship with companies that are seeking to put in place the safest possible products and management practices.

Following is a three-page survey that we request you complete and return to NCAMP by September 30, 1999. NCAMP will compile your and other utilities' responses and disseminate the information back to you and me with the results.

Thank you for your assistance in completing this survey. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

UTILITY COMPANY ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTICES SURVEY

Consumers would like to know how your policies and practices affect the environment. Please take a few minutes to fill out the following survey. We will provide you with the results when they are compiled. Please attach additional information, including policies and guidance materials, where they exist. Thank you for your time.

I. Person Completing Survey/Contact Person

Name _____
 Title _____
 Department _____
 Company _____
 Street Address/P.O. Box _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 Phone _____ Fax _____ Email _____ Website _____

II. Service Area

Square miles of service area _____
 Total number of pole miles in distribution system _____
 Total number of utility poles in service area _____

III. Pole Types

Please break down by type the total number of utility poles currently in service.

TOTAL NUMBER OF POLES IN SERVICE BY TYPE					
<i>Please indicate specific number of <u>in service</u> poles by type in boxes below.</i>					
WOOD POLES	CCA	Pentachlorophenol	Creosote	Other (specify)	Pole Size/Class
Southern yellow pine					
Western red cedar					
Douglas fir					
Other (please specify)					
NON-WOOD POLES					Pole Size/Class
Concrete					
Steel					
Composite					
Other (please specify)					

IV. Pole Cost

Please indicate the cost per pole (of the sizes indicated above) for the various types that are purchased.

\$_____ (wood, CCA); \$_____ (wood, penta); \$_____ (wood, creosote); \$_____ (concrete); \$_____ (steel); \$_____ composite; \$_____ (other).

Has your company performed an economic comparison of types of poles? yes no

If yes, summarize results. _____

V. Pole Maintenance

Are poles retreated during their service life: yes no

If yes, how often does retreatment take place? _____

What materials are used for retreatment? _____

Who conducts the retreatment? _____

VI. Pole Storage

Do you store poles? yes no.

If yes, how many poles are typically stored annually on company property (by type). _____

VII. Disposal/Recycling Methods

Do you dispose of poles? yes no

If yes, please explain the method used for each pole type. _____

If **no**, please explain what you do with poles (by type) when they are taken out of service. _____

Do you have a pole recycling program? yes no

If **yes**, please describe the program used for each type of pole. _____

VIII. Rights-of-Way Management

Does your company have a rights-of-way management policy? yes no.

If **yes**, could you please send us a copy?

If **no**, is your company developing a policy? yes no.

If **yes**, what is the expected date of completion? _____

IX. Future Plans

Is your company now considering, or has it decided on, an increase in its use of alternatives to treated wood poles? yes no.

If **yes**, toward which product type? _____

When will installation begin? _____

Please indicate any other future plans you may have regarding changes in pole material, maintenance, storage and disposal practices. *(Please use additional paper, if necessary.)* _____

**Please mail or fax survey and additional information by July 30, 1999 to:
National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP)
701 E Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003, (202) 543-5450 voice, (202) 543-4791 fax.
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call Kagan Owens at NCAMP. Thank you.**