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.

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,
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WOOD POLES</th>
<th>TOTAL NUMBER OF POLES IN SERVICE BY TYPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern yellow pine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western red cedar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Douglas fir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-WOOD POLES</th>
<th>Pole Size/Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Utility Company Environmental Practices Survey, National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides, July, 1999
**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. _________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Utility Company Environmental Practices Survey, National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides, July, 1999
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)
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call Kagan Owens at NCAMP. Thank you.

Utility Company Environmental Practices Survey, National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides, July, 1999