

**re 2017 Wood Pole Maintenance Program blog post @ re 2017 Wood Pole Maintenance Program
facebook post**

To SaskPower

This has to be an open letter because of the importance of the topic.

Your Facebook post has several important mistakes in #4 and not enough information in #3.

1) *"The poles have a small environmental impact since they are organic and can be recycled."*

To be charitable, this is incorrect. Considering you must know they cannot be 'recycled', it smells of disinformation. Power poles are treated with the pesticide *pentachlorophenol*, a dangerous cancer-causing chemical. *Penta* is part of the list of 'Dirty Dozen' pollutants. Most *penta* uses have already been phased out and its use for power poles is due to be phased out soon. Because power poles are treated with a toxic pesticide, the poles cannot be adequately 'recycled' but have to be incinerated in a proper facility. If by 'recycled' you mean giving them to non-profit organizations for garden posts or to set up nesting platforms, all you are doing is passing on the responsibility and cost of proper disposal of the poles, saving yourself some money in the guise of helping out; greenwashing in other words.

2) *"Wood costs less than other kinds of power pole material (such as steel and concrete)."*

Perhaps this is before you count the cost of properly disposing of each pole at an incinerator for toxic material. That used to be \$8000/pole decades ago. I don't know what it is now.

Because poles are treated with *penta*, a cancer-causing toxic material, I suspect power line technicians are regularly exposed and have an increased cancer risk. I wonder if they have ever been informed of this.

#3 *"Where we can, we repair or reinforce the pole to extend its life and keep it in service"*

As long as you are not repairing or reinforcing with *penta* treated wood, or wood treated with some other toxic wood treatment, I applaud your efforts. I would like to have details on the materials used for repair or reinforcement.

I applaud your efforts to keep our power infrastructure in good order, but would appreciate the use of a less toxic alternative such as steel or concrete for power poles.

I strongly feel that the choice of material for posts should also take into consideration the toxicity of *penta* as well as the health, environmental and safety concerns it poses. It should also consider the cost of proper disposal of such poles (likely well over \$8000.00/pole currently).

Sincerely Yours,

Paule Hjertaas, President and spokesperson for the Saskatchewan Network for Alternatives to Pesticides (SNAP)

www.snapinfo.ca and

https://www.facebook.com/SaskatchewanNetworkForAlternativesToPesticides/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel

There is a section on SNAP's web site on treated wood at <http://www.snapinfo.ca/issues/treated-wood> and it will be updated soon with new materials and a link to this letter.