

Thiele, LaValle Introduce Legislation Prohibiting Use of Utility Poles Treated With Harmful Industrial Wood Preservative

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Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. and State Senator Kenneth LaValle have introduced legislation that would prohibit the future use of utility poles treated with Pentachlorophenol (PCP), and call for the posting of warnings to inform people about the dangers of contact with PCP on existing poles.

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "Pentachlorophenol (PCP) was once one of the most widely used biocides in the United States, but it is now a restricted use pesticide and is no longer available to the general public. Pentachlorophenol is extremely toxic to humans from acute (short-term) ingestion and inhalation exposure. Acute inhalation exposures in humans have resulted in neurological, blood, and liver effects, and eye irritation. Chronic (long-term) exposure to pentachlorophenol by inhalation in humans has resulted in effects on the respiratory tract, blood, kidney, liver, immune system, eyes, nose, and skin. Human studies suggest an association between exposure to pentachlorophenol and cancer. Oral animal studies have reported increases in liver tumors and two uncommon tumor types. EPA has classified pentachlorophenol as a Group B2, probable human carcinogen".

Assemblyman Thiele noted, "The federal government has made it clear that PCP is a dangerous chemical and has outlawed its use by the general public. It is to be used only for industrial use away from the general population. Yet, this chemical has been used to treat utility poles for transmission lines in places like East Hampton that are only a few feet from residential dwellings, exposing children and families to this dangerous substance. Further, at a time when we are all focused on the degradation of our water, it is inconceivable that wood treated with this substance would be permitted to leach into the groundwater on Long Island. There are better options and those options should be implemented now."

Senator LaValle said, "This is a critical public health and safety matter. People need to be made aware of the presence of PCP, so they can protect themselves, their children and their pets from the potential dangers posed by this chemical. This type of coating to preserve utility poles needs to be discontinued for public health reasons as soon as possible."