

Commonly Asked Questions About Penta

Q: What disposal options are available after poles are taken out of service?

A: Because they are not considered to be a hazardous waste, penta poles can be safely reused and recycled in a number of ways, such as fence posts and farm lighting. In fact, industry data indicate that nearly 70 percent of out-of-service poles are re-used.

Penta poles can be burned for energy recovery in combustion units and industrial boilers that are allowed to burn penta-treated wood because penta does not contain any toxic metals, unlike some other wood preservatives. This results in almost complete destruction of the penta, with dioxin/furan emissions comparable to that from ordinary particleboard.

If re-use or energy recovery options are not available, penta poles can be safely disposed of in landfills in accordance with state and local requirements.

Q: What precautions can be taken to minimize exposure to penta?

A: A number of safety precautions should be taken when handling, using or disposing of penta-treated wood to minimize potential health effects. These include wearing protective gloves and clothing, washing clothes and exposed skin, and adhering to common sense precautions, such as not burning penta poles or using penta-treated wood in places where there will be frequent or prolonged contact with humans and animals.

The Consumer Information Sheet—Pentachlorophenol Pressure-Treated Wood that was jointly developed by the American Wood Preservers Institute and the EPA provides useful safety and handling guidance.

Q: Are people who work with penta poles at risk?

A: Numerous scientific studies and a 60-year history of effective use demonstrate that penta does not cause adverse health effects when properly used. With proper application, handling and use, exposures to penta among wood treaters, linemen and others who work with penta are low—typically far below levels at which test animals have shown any toxic effects – and well within safety margins.

Penta has not been shown to cause cancer in humans. Concerns about penta's potential health effects are based on the results of tests performed on laboratory animals. As a result of these tests, penta has been shown to be a weak carcinogen that is classified as "possibly carcinogenic to humans".



