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SCHUMER: AT LEAST 95,000 UTILITY POLES ON LONG ISLAND HAVE BEEN TREATED WITH A HIGHLY TOXIC CHEMICAL KNOWN TO CAUSE SERIOUS HEALTH ISSUES; SENATOR URGES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY TO IMMEDIATELY INVESTIGATE THE USE OF “PENTA” ON WOODEN UTILITY POLES – CALLS ON PSEG TO SUSPEND FURTHER USE OF CHEMICAL ON POLES UNTIL COMPLETION

Schumer Highlighted Concern That The Toxic Chemical, Pentachlorophenol, Is Being Used to Treat New Wooden PSEG-LI Utility Poles & Could Leach Into Groundwater Over Long Term As Poles Deteriorate; Studies Suggest Penta Can Result in Neurological & Issues With Respiratory Tract, Kidney, Immune System & More

Schumer Calls for Immediate Federal EPA Investigation Into the Potential Long-Term Health Impacts of Using Penta-Treated Poles – Notes That Previous Private Studies Are Narrow and Insufficient – Calls on PSEG to Immediately Suspend Use of Chemical on Utility Poles Until EPA Investigation into Safety Is Complete

Senator Says Penta Poles Can Be Found in Parks, Outside Schools & Nearby Local Businesses - Given Risks More Caution and Research Is Needed to Ensure Residents, Children Are Not Be Exposed to Highly Toxic Chemical

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer today called on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to immediately investigate the specific use of pentachlorophenol, a toxic wood preservative, on utility poles throughout Long Island and urged PSEG Long Island to immediately suspend further use of this chemical until their federal study is complete. PSEG has been installing new, more resilient chemically treated utility poles throughout the Town of North Hempstead and the Town of East Hampton. Schumer noted serious concern that treating the poles with such a toxic chemical could potentially cause health risks to utility workers, adults and children and could leach into ground water over the long-term as the poles deteriorate. Schumer noted that a private firm has conducted a study based on a very limited sample size that does not consider long-term risks as the pole decomposes and further leaches toward groundwater. The EPA, which is the authority for health and environmental risk of such chemicals, has noted public health concerns related to the chemical when ingested or inhaled, like neurological, respiratory, kidney and immune system concerns. Despite these public health red flags, penta has been used on at least 95,000 wooden utility poles on Long Island, and will continue to be used in future installations.

Today, Schumer said that because the penta treated telephone and electrical poles can be found in populated areas like yards, parks, outside schools and around local businesses, it is critical that the EPA quickly conduct a safety review of penta related to human health risks and risks to soil and groundwater, and urged that PSEG suspend the use of this chemical in utility poles until the EPA investigation proves this chemical appropriate for use in these poles.

Schumer was joined by Town of North Hempstead Supervisor Judi Bosworth and Patti Wood, the director of Grassroots Environmental Education, Inc.; as well as other Long Island residents.

"There's no debate that 'penta' is a highly toxic chemical that should be nowhere near playgrounds or our drinking water, and I am petitioning the federal EPA to step in and investigate the long-term impact of using this toxic chemical specifically on utility poles in Long Island neighborhoods and parks. The EPA is the golden standard when it comes to assessing health and environmental risk of such chemicals, and has yet to review penta, and I am urging them to end the debate regarding the use of this chemical by PSEG. Many of these wooden utility poles are standing nearby schools, parks, businesses and homes, and so, we must ensure that residents and children are not being exposed to the highly toxic chemical if it leaches into the ground water. In the meantime, PSEG should stop installing these utility poles until the long-term federal investigation is completed," **said Senator Schumer.**

"I am extremely pleased to be standing with Senator Schumer as we speak out about the harmful effects of Penta to our residents and our environment. I and many of the Town's residents are extremely concerned about the continued use of Penta as a pesticide for utility poles. Penta is a probable carcinogen and has long been recognized as a public health threat. It's time for the EPA to investigate this toxic carcinogen," **said Town of North Hempstead Supervisor Judi Bosworth.**

“I join Senator Schumer and Supervisor Bosworth in raising serious health concerns over pentachlorophenol contamination. Recent soil and groundwater tests adjacent to newly installed utility poles in East Hampton found penta in the soil at extremely high levels—at amounts far exceeding New York State Department of Environmental Conservation standards—and chemical components associated with penta in the groundwater,” **said Town of East Hampton Supervisor Larry Cantwell.**

The wood preservative known as pentachlorophenol, or “penta,” is used to treat wooden utility poles throughout Long Island and across the country to help prevent decay. According to the EPA, short-term ingestion and inhalation of penta is extremely toxic to humans and is a “probable” human carcinogen. Short-term inhalation of penta can result in issues with the respiratory tract, blood, kidney, liver, immune system, eyes, nose, skin as well as neurological issues. Penta is banned or severely restricted in 33 countries, but not the United States. In October, the Stockholm Convention discussed pushing a worldwide ban on penta.

On Long Island, 95,000 of LIPA’s 324,000 utility poles have been treated with penta. Across the country, penta is used on approximately 55 percent of 166 million wooden utility poles.

Localities throughout Long Island have voiced concern about the use of this chemical and the potential for it to leach into the ground water. Specifically, New York State Senator John LaValle and Assemblyman Fred Thiele introduced legislation to ban the use of penta on utility poles. The Town of East Hampton proposed legislation banning the use of penta within the town. Twenty six countries, including Canada, currently ban pentachlorophenol completely. In December, the preservative was found in soil surrounding the utility poles in East Hampton. Schumer said that a recent study conducted by a private firm is totally insufficient in terms of ensuring that these penta-treated poles do not pose a threat to the long-term health of local residents: the study was based on a very limited sample size and studied poles that were recently placed in the ground. Schumer said that the federal government should be involved, and urged the EPA to conduct a federal study on penta’s long-term impact on communities with these utility poles, particularly related to the long-term degradation of these poles and subsequent leaching into the soil and ground water. The EPA recently announced that it plans to reassess the safety of Penta, however the agency has yet to release its final work plan to evaluate health and environmental risks, and Schumer is urging the agency to focus on the specific threat that utility poles treated with this substance may pose to communities across Long Island.

Schumer has raised concerns with penta in the past. Specifically, last year, Schumer introduced legislation that will ban the top ten noxious flame retardants from upholstered furniture and children’s products.

Schumer today urged the EPA to immediately investigate the use of penta on wooden utility poles, as the toxic chemical could potentially leach into the ground water as the poles deteriorate. Schumer also called on PSEG to stop installing penta-treated wooden poles until the EPA’s federal study is complete.