



Weeping Creosote Poles

Recently there have been several sightings of Safety Signs becoming obscured by creosote due to weeping poles. There are Quality Control processes in place to minimise weeping poles, including controlling the density and temperature of the creosote and the moisture of the wood. However, preventing weeping poles altogether is not possible.

If a weeping pole is identified in a SPEN depot or at a contractor's pole storage area, it shall not be used and the team leader shall be informed, who in turn shall inform Standards.

Where the poles are in a SPEN depot, the team leader shall also inform the appropriate Logistics Section. The Logistics Section will then liaise with the pole supplier. Where the poles are in a contractor's pole storage area, the contractor will liaise with the pole supplier directly.

The supplier will then remove the poles at the next delivery/uplift date and then clean and replace the poles.

Irrespective of whether or not a pole is weeping, exposure to creosote can occur either through direct contact with a new pole or through indirect contact with the vapour. To prevent chemical burns, it is important that poles are handled in accordance with [OHL-16-001](#). Ensure that overalls, gloves and light eye protection are worn at all times. If contact occurs, an Approved hand cleaner wipe (SAP code: 30032479) would be sufficient to remove the creosote from the skin. Moisturise the affected area once clean.

When erecting new poles, copper treated poles should be used where the pole is to be in close proximity to outdoor recreational areas or other areas frequented by members of the public. Where an existing weeping pole is identified in service, a breathable creosote barrier sleeve (SAP code: 30050287) should be installed to protect the public or livestock from the creosote.

It is vital that all Safety Signs are kept visible at all times to meet the requirements of ESQCR.

Recommendations and action points

- Moving forward, when fixing Safety Signs to creosote poles, the curve on the sign should be increased slightly to provide a stand-off gap for the creosote to run behind. A gap of approximately 10mm should be made. This method should not be applied to any pole where it could be used as a climbing aid along with other pole mounted apparatus or obstacles near to the pole.
- The amount of bend required will depend on the diameter of the pole. Attach the Safety Sign with two nails at one side, gently push the sign in to create the desired gap before putting in the last two nails.



Obscured Safety Sign



Creosote Barrier Sleeve



Create slight bend in Safety Sign