



# *Safety Advice 02-2004 (NZ)*

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## **SAFETY WITH WOODEN POLES**

The following information is from a summary report prepared by an Asset Owner in response to their concerns about rotten poles.

“Recent examples of rotten poles (ie. Hardwood, Larch, Tanalised) highlight the need to exercise extreme caution before any work on or in the near vicinity of these poles. The following recommended testing procedures / precautions must be adhered to before commencing work.

There are concerns, particularly when there is a non-registered pole that has failed after only seven years service. The sub standard pole in question carried no specification disc and the following safety procedure has been developed for field staff. Even where a wooden pole may appear to be visually ok, this check by itself is not sufficient to deem a pole as structurally sound.

- (i) Where no pole specification disc is found, that pole should be treated as non-compliant, logged onto a defect report and the Asset Owner / Manager informed as soon as possible.
- (ii) Field staff shall ensure that full safety checks are initiated before any type of work is undertaken. These checks shall include:
  - **Visual** - The entire pole needs to be inspected.
  - **Cleaning** - Clean and inspect the base of the pole.
  - **Digging** - To a depth of no less than 400 mm.
  - **Hammering** - To test the soundness of the pole.
  - **Probing** - To check for rot or other decay.
  - **Pushing** - By hand and by ladder.
  - **Drilling** - This is only a last resort.



A recently discovered rotten larch pole (above) in which the area of rot concerned was at two metres above the ground level. This demonstrates the importance of all pole security checks before any climbing is attempted.



If field staff still have any concerns about the security of the pole then immediate pole security is a must, this shall include but not limited to the following before any attempt is made to climb the pole.

**RECOMMENDED RESPONSE OPTIONS SHOULD AN UNSAFE POLE BE LOCATED**

- If available use an EWP. This is the preferred method.
- Erect a new pole next to the suspect pole and work from the new pole.
- Support the suspect pole by way of pikes.
- Support the suspect pole by way of ladders.
- Support the suspect pole by using a crane.

No job is so important that it should be done in an unsafe manner.

Your safety is paramount and at no time is it acceptable to take risks that will endanger yourself or your workmates.