

Q. Explain what conditions trigger distribution feeder inspectors to sound and bore distribution poles and what conditions trigger when a distribution pole must be replaced.

A. The requirement to complete sounding and core-sampling tests on wood distribution poles, as well as determining when a distribution pole must be replaced is based on the judgement and experience of the distribution feeder inspectors.¹ The inspectors use the Distribution Inspection and Maintenance Practices document as a guideline for completing distribution feeder inspections.²

For sounding and core-sampling tests, page 4 of the Distribution Inspection and Maintenance Practices document states that:

“During each distribution line inspection, all wood poles require a detailed visual inspection. Depending on the results of the visual inspection a sounding test may be performed. If the visual inspection and/or the sounding test indicate a problem, a core-sampling test may be performed to aid in the evaluation of the pole.”

The Deficiency Reference Tables in Appendix A of the document identify common deficiencies and repair priorities for wood poles, as well as other types of equipment. The conditions that would typically trigger a wood pole replacement are broken or seriously cracked poles, rotted poles, or poles with severe woodpecker holes.

¹ To inspect Newfoundland Power distribution lines, an inspector must have the following minimum qualifications: (i) minimum 3 years of experience in the electrical utility industry in the operations or engineering area; (ii) familiarity with the operation, maintenance and construction of utility lines; (iii) familiarity with the use and operation of ATV's and snowmobiles; and, (iv) basic understanding of the electrical and mechanical nature of utility lines. Distribution line inspections require evaluation of the distribution poles.

² A copy of the Company's Distribution Inspection and Maintenance Practices is provided in Attachment A of the response to Request for Information PUB-NP-067. All overhead primary distribution lines are required to have a minimum of 1 detailed ground inspection every 7 years. However, Superintendents of Area Operations have the discretion to have more frequent inspections done if time and manpower allow.