

Montana Power Finds Solution to Woodpecker Problem at Substation

by Rose Lei, Electrical Engineer, Great Falls Division, Montana Power Co.

The game is over at a small substation in the little belt mountains in central Montana. In the past, the wood pole on which the static wire over the substation is dead ended, has been the playing field for woodpeckers against the company. The woodpeckers have succeeded in their damage to this pole and others in the area. Even though, in a final attempt, we wrapped this pole with wire mesh fabric, the woodpeckers still penetrated our defense.

Then, in November 1994, we set a 52' unguyed, dead end laminated pole from Laminated Wood Systems, Inc. (LWS). Since this pole was one of



Woodpecker Damaged Round Wood Pole



New E-LAM Pole

the first laminated poles in the area, there were a lot of questions for the guys at LWS. Their engineers were very knowledgeable, patient, and easy to work with. Phone calls were answered promptly and efficiently. The design criteria sheet to be filled out for the pole did not take a huge chunk of my time. These guys understood my concerns.

Now, after more than 6 years in use, there are no signs of woodpecker damage to the laminate, while others in the area continue to be damaged with every passing season.

We Finally Won!

Woodpeckers vs Laminated Wood Poles

HISTORY - At least two years prior to the installation of the first tubular steel pole, over a thousand laminated wood poles were installed in Idaho in an area highly prone to woodpecker attack. Laminated wood poles have been in service from twenty to thirty five years in the following states: Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Connecticut, Iowa, Missouri, Minnesota, New York, Wisconsin, Maine, Illinois, Iowa, North Carolina, Florida and Texas with no reports of significant woodpecker damage (even on lines intermixed with round poles that have been devastated).



SURVEY RESULTS - In June of 1990, Dr. Jeffrey J. Morrell of Oregon State University and Robert Reisdorff of LWS, conducted a survey of the Electric Utility Industry to develop a field of history of existing laminated wood poles. This survey revealed laminated wood poles installed in woodpecker prone areas have far outperformed solid round wood poles. Additional information collected over the last few years has continued to support this claim. While nobody really knows all of the reasons why woodpeckers dislike laminated wood poles, we feel that over thirty-five years of excellent field performance clearly demonstrates an advantage for the laminated wood poles in woodpecker prone areas.

Please Call 1-800-949-3526 for additional information.