

WHO International EMF Project
14th International Advisory Committee meeting
New Zealand country report 2009

Policies and legislation on EMF exposure

Legislation

Work on mandating national policies and Standards on EMF exposure in environmental legislation has continued over the past year.

The *Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Telecommunication Facilities) Regulations 2008*, promulgated under the Resource Management Act came into force in October 2008*. Under the Regulations, a transmitter is permitted provided that it complies with New Zealand Standard 2772.1:1999 *Radiofrequency Fields Part 1: - Maximum exposure levels 3 kHz - 300 GHz* (which is based on the 1998 ICNIRP Guidelines, and includes a requirement to minimise unnecessary exposures). The operator must submit a report on exposures to the local council detailing exposures from a facility in publicly accessible areas. This report must consider contributions from other transmitters nearby. If exposures are expected to exceed 25% of the reference levels, measurements to confirm compliance with the Standard are required once the site is operational.

Policies

The *Interagency Committee on the Health Effects of Non-Ionising Fields* held two further meetings during the year to provide the New Zealand Director General of Health with scientific and technical advice on any potential health effects from exposures to ELF and RF fields. The results from recent research considered by the Committee have not given cause for concern and no change to existing recommendations (essentially to comply with ICNIRP Guidelines, and apply low or no cost measures to avoid or reduce exposures) has been considered necessary.

Public concerns

Proposed 400 kV transmission line

In 2008 a Board of Inquiry heard submissions about a proposed new 400 kV transmission line. Many of these submissions concerned possible health effects, and extensive evidence was presented on this aspect. The Board's draft decision was published in May 2009[†], and concluded that "there would not be significant risk to human health from operation of the grid upgrade in compliance with the proposed conditions".

* For more detail see <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/telecommunication-standards.html>

† See <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/rma/call-in-transpower/board-of-inquiry/report-and-decision/>

Cellsites

There has been increased concern over the past year about cellsites, due partly to publicity about the new *National Environmental Standards for Telecommunication Facilities* discussed previously, and partly to the rollout of a new cellular network and modifications of sites and installation of new sites by the two existing cellular network operators. Measurements made by National Radiation Laboratory staff continue to show that maximum exposures in publicly accessible areas around cellsites are generally less than 1% of the ICNIRP limits (and typically much lower still). This remains the case even where several sites are within a few tens of metres of each other.

One community group presented a petition to the Local Government and Environment Select Committee, seeking (amongst other things) the prohibition of cellsites within 1 km of educational facilities, and a legislative requirement for notification and community consultation for sites in residential areas. The Select Committee held hearings but further consideration was postponed by an election.

Research activities

Staff at the Auckland School of Population Health and the Massey University Centre for Public Health Research continue to work on the IARC extension of the Interphone study looking at occupational exposures to EMFs and possible relationships to tumours of the brain and nervous system.

Staff at the Auckland School of Population Health are also involved in the MOBI-kids study.

Public information activities

The revised National Radiation Laboratory/Ministry of Health publication *Electric and Magnetic Fields and Your Health* has been revised and reprinted. It is also available online at <http://www.nrl.moh.govt.nz/publications/emfbooklet.pdf>.

A Ministry of Health information sheet on radiofrequency fields has also been revised and reprinted, and is available at:
<http://www.healthed.govt.nz/resources/radiofrequencyfields.aspx>.

New Zealand National Radiation Laboratory/Ministry of Health

3 June 2009