

SOUTH AFRICA

EMF NATIONAL REPORT 2016

General research activities related to EMF health:

Not aware of any current research activity involving electromagnetic fields.

New policies and legislation:

Still waiting for the WHO health risk assessment for radiofrequency fields to be published. Once this is available, the process could possibly continue to compile updated legislation (i.e. enabling act and associated regulations) in order to regulate human exposure to non-ionizing electromagnetic fields. The WHO model legislation would most probably be used as the framework for this purpose.

Working Group 5 of the South African Bureau of Standards Technical Committee 73 considers the development and adoption of standards related to the measurement and calculation of human exposure to time-varying electromagnetic fields. The standards developed in this regard by IEC TC106 and CENELEC TC106X are then adopted and overwritten as South African national standards, as and when appropriate.

Areas of public concern and national responses:

Exposure to base stations remains a definite concern of the general public and activists such as the Electromagnetic Radiation Research Foundation of South Africa continue to exploit the general public's ignorance about and fear of electromagnetic fields for their own purposes. Queries from members of the public and community groups are handled by the Department of Health on an individual basis and people are, as a rule, referred to the website of the International EMF Project, because this is also the Department of Health's primary source of information and guidance with regard to the health effects of EMF.

Several large metropolitan areas in South Africa (where the highest concentrations of cellular masts typically exist) have based the health aspect of their telecommunications infrastructure policies on the ICNIRP guidelines, following explicit recommendations by the Department of Health in this regard. Unfortunately, the current lack of comprehensive national regulations is problematic for local authorities that have to deal with queries about their respective policies.

New/ongoing public information activities:

In view of the absence of compulsory regulatory requirements for human exposure to electromagnetic fields, the Directorate Radiation Control (as part of the Department of Health) has compiled a two page open letter that briefly explains the Department's viewpoint regarding the health effects of cellular base stations and handsets. Emphasis is placed on compliance with the recommendations of the International EMF Project and application of the ICNIRP exposure guidelines as the science-based way to deal with any situation involving human exposure to electromagnetic fields.