

Israel

Report on EMF Activities

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ELF Test Case in Israel

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In August 2000 the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) issued a Draft NIR Law that was circulated among all the relevant ministries (Health, Communication, Infrastructure, Treasury, Defense, Law, and Prime Minister's Office). By 2003 comments were received from all Ministries except for the Infrastructure Ministry. Most of the comments were incorporated into the Law.

When IARC classified magnetic fields as "Possible Carcinogenic 2B", MOE made a reassessment of the available data about exposure from new installations in the last 7 years and decided that the reduction of the planning standards for the Israeli Electric Company (IEC) power lines to 10mG (24h TWA) was feasible. MOE decided to implement the precautionary principle by setting an environmental guideline of 10mG for magnetic fields whilst keeping the health guideline for magnetic fields that of ICNIRP 1998. This environmental guideline was for the construction of new facilities in areas, where there was a potential for public exposure (24h TWA).

In 2002 MOE appointed an advisory committee whose task was to "Establish an Israeli guideline for power frequency electromagnetic fields based on the international guidelines in the developed countries and to develop the framework for implementation." Members of the committee were Experts in Magnetic fields: IEC (2) Ministry of Health (2), Ministry of Infrastructure (1), Soreq NRC (2), Science Ministry (1), and MOE (2). The chair of the Committee was the Chief Scientist of the MOE. The committee is still at work to this day.

In the beginning of 2004 the NIR Law was presented in its updated format to the governmental Legislation Committee. The Ministry of Infrastructure opposed the Law, claiming that it imposes too high a financial burden. The committee asked the MOE to present a cost-benefit analysis to facilitate a decision.

Consequently MOE informed the public that NIR Law would not be approved since the IEC and Ministry of Infrastructure opposed it, and that without a suitable legal background the Ministry will not be able to issue radiation permits to the IEC. MOE stressed that after IARC classification and the fact sheet 263 there is a need to control the construction of new facilities in order to make sure the 10 mG environmental guideline would be implemented. This statement caused public concern followed by a Knesset intervention and a few private law proposals by Knesset members.

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As a first step in the cost benefit analysis the MOE asked IEC to present a list of all the power lines, transformation stations and other sources that were erected in 2003, and to measure the magnetic fields in 33 education facilities (out of more than 5200), which were in close vicinity to power lines (less than 25m).

This information reached the public and due to the fact that magnetic field measurements in a few schools exceeded the environmental guidelines, more public concern ensued. The press widely covered the issue.

In response to the public concern MOE and IEC provided free measurements in schools. Privately procured measurements by authorized inspectors were also carried out throughout the country.

At this stage IEC requested the Ministry of Infrastructure to support the Law in principle and to conclude the discussions so as to reach an agreement on the remaining issues such as old versus new facilities, and interim measures until the ELF ordinance will take effect.

Although the use of public concern as a tool to promote the MOE NIR Law is questionable practice, as we can see from this test case it may have achieved its goal.

National activities for the State of Israel 2003-2004

Ministry of the Environment³

- The Radiation Safety Division issues annual radiation permits for stationary RF stations. During annual checks some were found operating without permit renewal. This information triggered Environmental Committee of the Knesset to reexamine the issue of base stations, mobile phones and public health. This generated an extensive press coverage, which exacerbated public concern.
- The Ministry's Website (www.environment.gov.il) has been updated to include an interactive map including the name of the operator, location, typical pictures of different types of stations, when the permits were issued, date and the maximum power density measured in the vicinity of the station.
- A laser accident left 3 teenagers with limited peripheral vision. The accident was in a Discotheque, where the operator scanned the public with a class 4 laser. A lawsuit was filed against the owner of the establishment. The Ministry issued guidelines to the Israeli DJ's Association and Banquet Hall owners association stating that the public should not be scanned with lasers (in laser shows or Discos).
- The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Environment have not come to terms on the issue of who is responsible for insuring public safety during the use of tanning equipment (for health or cosmetic purposes).
- Due to public concern broadcasting from **all** antennae in Hillel Site (the largest broadcasting station) was interrupted indefinitely (see last year's description of test case).

Soreq NRC⁴

- A first in the series of reports of the National Survey of Occupational exposure to RF fields has been issued. The report identified all work places and occupational settings with potential exposure to RF and Microwave radiation. It includes the number of workers exposed and their estimated exposure levels. The second report will identify the working environments having the maximal collective and personnel dose to assess the possibility of reducing the exposure levels. This may be used as a base for future epidemiological studies.

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- The first stage of the national survey of environmental EMF levels of different RF sources has been completed. Using a technology that allows improved isotropic narrowband spectral mapping of RF sources, a mapping of RF exposure levels of 200 sites throughout Israel has been carried out. The areas mapped consisted of urban, rural and open field areas. The contribution of different RF sources to environmental EMF levels was identified and compared between those areas. The results will soon be published in Hebrew with an abstract in English. This study may be used as a base for epidemiological studies.
- A report concerning the effect of RF radiation from different sources (150 MHz and 900MHz) on four life supporting medical devices has been finalized.
- Performance of different RF monitoring equipment was tested to assess the performance, sensitivity of the monitors and identify problems associated with the use of this equipment in various conditions.

General

- The Israeli Ministry of Education has established a committee whose purpose is to come up with a policy recommendation concerning environmental issues affecting the population of children in educational facilities. Among the issues to be addressed are: siting of electromagnetic sources such as base stations, other broadcasting stations, power lines, transformation stations in the vicinity of schools. It should also provide guidelines for the use of mobile phones and laser equipment in schools.