

COUNTRY REPORT ON EMF IN MALAYSIA

General Research Activities

An on going surveillance measurement in the area of ELF (mainly from the power line distribution system) and RF (from mobile phone base stations) to determine compliance of public exposures to international standards (ICNIRP) has been carried out to cover the whole country geographically. Measurement of magnetic field strength for home appliances was also carried out to provide a local database on the exposure levels of magnetic fields encountered in the home environment in this country. Measurement of EMF in critical areas (with life-supporting equipment) in hospitals, which began in 2004, has been extended to other areas in the hospital. The measurement will also include more hospitals to get a better picture of the overall situation in this country.

Policies and Legislations

Due to the uncertainty in the possibility of adverse health effects that may arise as a result of exposure to EMF, the trend is to adopt precautionary principles for the management of health risks. At present Malaysia uses ICNIRP standards and WHO recommendations for EMF exposure limits for the public and workers.

The telecommunications industry in Malaysia is governed by the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588) and its subsidiary legislations and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) is the regulatory agency. The energy industry in Malaysia is governed by the Electricity Supply Act 1990 and the Electrical Supply Regulations 1993, where the Energy Commission (EC) is the enforcement body.

Public Concerns and National Responses

The gaps in knowledge and the uncertainty on the possible adverse health effects of exposure to EMF even at very low levels cause the public to be concerned and health issues of EMF are still major issues. The robust growth of the mobile phone industry and the availability of mobile phones explicitly designed for young children together with the publicity generated by the mass media have caused great concern among the public; especially in regards to brain cancer and cognitive function in children.

Another major public concern is the possible adverse health effects that may arise due to exposures to ELF mainly from power lines, distribution lines,

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substations, and transformers. In response to that, the Malaysian government has taken several steps which include:

- i) Continuously monitoring and reviewing the latest research findings and information published by recognized bodies such as WHO and ICNIRP.
- ii) Conducting a series of seminars on mobile phones to disseminate balanced and accurate information to the public.
- iii) Surveillance measurement on exposures from base stations, power lines and distribution lines.
- iv) Developing guidelines on ELF and RF.

Public Information

The Inter-Agency Advisory Scientific Committee on Non-Ionizing Radiation chaired by the Ministry of Health continues to monitor the local and foreign publications and findings and will report in the local media the latest findings on the health effects of EMF which may be useful to the Malaysian public.

Dissemination of information to the public is achieved through the following means:

- i) Publications
 - A booklet on “Radiation, Mobile Phones, Base Stations and Your Health” which was first printed in 2003 in English was reprinted in 2005 in two languages (English and Malay).
 - A pamphlet entitled “Make Safety Your Main Priority” gives general information about non-ionizing radiation and which addresses the issues pertaining to telecommunication towers.
 - A pamphlet entitled “Guidelines on Ultraviolet Radiation in the Workplace” provides basic information on UV, its health effects and control measures to prevent overexposure.
 - The Ministry of Housing and Local Government Malaysia is finalizing a guideline on installation of telecommunication towers and transmission structures.
- ii) Seminar / Forum

Seminars / forums on non-ionizing radiation and a series of seminars / forums specifically designed to discuss mobile phones were organized.

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