



Base Station EMF Policies

The GSMA recognises that there is public concern about allegations of possible health risks from radio base stations. We believe that governmental policies should be based on sound scientific evidence and oppose the imposition of restrictions on siting that discriminate against mobile communications.

Background

As a response to controversy about the siting of mobile communications base stations, some councils and national authorities have considered the adoption of policies based on arbitrarily low exposure limits or exclusion zones around locations such as schools, hospitals or childcare facilities. In some cases these have been justified on the basis of incorrect reports of their adoption in other countries. Contrary to claims on the Internet, there are no such enforceable national policies in Australia, France, Germany, New Zealand, the UK or USA. Exclusion zones may create reception black spots or network congestion. These policies can also cause related planning complications, as a logical consequence of an exclusion zone is that new community facilities, such as schools, hospitals or childcare facilities, cannot be built within such zones around existing base station sites.

The European Union

In 1999, the Council of the European Union recommended that member states adopt EMF limits based on the international guidelines of the International Commission on Non Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). The European Commission has said of exclusion zones that:

‘The distance between a residential area and an antenna is not a proper indicator of its effect on the overall exposure of the public and scientific evidence does not support the assumption according to which an antenna within 300 metres would have adverse effects on public health. As long as factual exposure remains below the recommended levels, the health of the citizens is to our best knowledge well protected.’



Measurements in the UK of a sample of base stations showed that exposure levels were generally between 0.002% and 2% of the international guidelines for public exposure and even the highest measured levels did not exceed 10% of the guidelines. This led to the conclusion by UK authorities that:

'The measurements also demonstrate that there is no scientific basis for establishing minimal distances between base stations and areas of public occupancy, as has been suggested in some countries. There are many sources of exposure to RF fields, and it would in practice have little impact on people's overall exposure.'

World Health Organization (WHO)

The WHO position is that no adverse health consequences have been established from exposure to radio signals at levels below international guidelines. The WHO has commented on policies that include arbitrary reductions of exposure limits:

'A principle requirement is that such policies be adopted only under the condition that scientific assessments of risk and science-based exposure limits should not be undermined by the adoption of arbitrary cautionary approaches. That would occur, for example, if limit values were lowered to levels that bear no relationship to the established hazards or have inappropriate arbitrary adjustments to the limit values to account for the extent of scientific uncertainty.'

The WHO has also stated that:

'It is difficult to envision a consistent and equitable cautionary policy that would minimize radiofrequency EMF exposures from cellular telephone base stations given the presence of far higher powered sources in the same urban area.'

GSMA Position

The GSMA supports the adoption of policies and standards based on established scientific evidence. We oppose the adoption of arbitrary and discriminatory measures that restrict the siting of base station antennas.



Where to go for more information

GSMA: <http://www.gsmworld.com/health>