

Mobile phone base stations

Mobile phone base stations should perhaps be regarded as a source of environmental pollution. We do mean pollution, as an addition to the environment of contaminants with harmful consequences, where action is required to eliminate or reduce the impact. The history of industrial development is underlined by invention, a period of dirty expansion, objection and finally, clear-up. The problem with Non-ionising electromagnetic radiation (NIEMR) or electromagnetic fields (EMF) is that the very means of operation is inherently a pollutant; take away the radiation and you have no product. The questions are, then:

1. If the pollution is indeed harmful, what alternatives for mobile communication exist?
2. How, in a complex and already variously polluted environment, can we gain a clear picture of the potential harmful role of EM fields?
3. How do we receive and treat people who feel certain that they (or their patients, or clients, or employees etc.) are harmed by EM fields?
4. If universal harm does seem possible, even for a low percentage of the population, is this an acceptable by-product of an otherwise beneficial technology?
5. What if the low percentage is merely an indicator of more universal harm (the canary in the coalmine)?

These are non-trivial questions, and we separate out this page on masts (base stations) because there distinctive social and environmental issues:

- Is it acceptable to erect transmitting apparatus that people feel even *may* cause harm, among housing, on top of schools and hospitals, adjacent to bedroom windows etc.? Is the assumption of harmlessness justifiable, when there is a very great deal of science on low-intensity effects and precious little long-term epidemiological studies? In fact studies that have been done, do show a chronic exposure risk. Should this have to be explained in scientific detail before being explored further? The only response this kind of work receives is that it is somehow 'badly done' and is therefore wholly uninformative.
- If users want to take their mobiles anywhere, the masts must be everywhere to make them work. That means it has been decided that mast radiation is inescapable, on the premise that the 'general population' cannot be harmed by them. Supposing everyone were forced to eat nuts: would the adverse and fatal reactions in some people be acceptable, if nuts were thought generally beneficial to the economy? And, after all, we accept 4,000 deaths on UK roads each year. But of course we choose how and where to travel: road dangers are not presented universally without discretion.
- Decisions about base station siting is almost completely in the hands of those who have a financial interest, and nowhere is consultation (in the sense of making joint decisions) real, effective or even attempted.

There are real social, health and well-being issues impacting people's lives. And they are powerless, disbelieved, and apparently dispensable. Resources for the transmitting industry are boundless, governments and planning bodies support this golden-egg laying goose. But the scientific evidence is plain to us, and detailed, and only by accepting ambiguous studies as strong indication of there being no problem can anyone avoid this conclusion.

Dose-response and non-linearity

Why mobile phone masts (base stations) can be more dangerous than the phones, Andrew Goldsworthy

