

Ofcom Consultation: Proposed measures to require compliance with international guidelines for limiting exposure to electromagnetic fields

Comments from: Dave Ashton

The comments below relate to both the draft licence condition, and the 'Guidance on EMF Compliance and Enforcement'.

In my response to the initial Ofcom EMF consultation, I summarised Ofcom's Duty of Care towards the public, and then set out my reasons for not supporting the proposals, as they were based on ICNIRP's Guidelines, which fail to recognise non-thermal effects linked to electromagnetic fields and radiation – despite significant recent scientific findings, and an extensive database of historic scientific findings, which stretches back decades.

Instead, Ofcom is relying on Public Health England's assurances that ICNIRP's Guidelines are protective, despite the obvious conflict of interest present when three senior PHE employees are themselves members of ICNIRP, including **Dr Simon Mann**, who:

'...heads the Physical Dosimetry Department at Public Health England's Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards, and is responsible for programmes of scientific work to develop health-related advice on exposures to electromagnetic fields (EMFs) and optical radiation across the UK'. [1]

(Dr Simon Mann is by training an engineer, as is the head of the World Health Organisation's EMF Project, Emilie van Deventer, whilst the ICNIRP Chairman, Dr Rodney Croft, is a psychologist. The relevance of these academic backgrounds to setting safe, biologically-based, EMF exposure levels is not obvious.)

By adhering to ICNIRP's Guidelines, Ofcom is failing to implement protective EMF exposure levels, and so the updated licence conditions and compliance and enforcement measures are unfit for purpose. This is an exercise in futility.

In addition, Ofcom has ignored the health concerns expressed by many respondents to the initial consultation. In other words, the regulator of wireless technologies throughout the United Kingdom has decided that scientific findings which negate the credibility of ICNIRP's Guidelines are of no importance, and can be ignored.

I challenge this assumption. As I noted in my previous response, Ofcom has a duty to protect public health, and in order to do this, it must base its decisions on solid principles, and it should resist unreasonable demands from the industry that it supposedly regulates. In my previous response, I suggested that the EMF exposure levels used in the UK for wireless technologies should:

- 1) Be based upon objective and independent scientific and medical evidence, which does not put the interests of the technology and telecommunications industry ahead of public health.
- 2) Protect the public both from chronic exposures, and from all adverse health effects, whether of thermal or non-thermal origin.
- 3) Recognise the biological effects of artificial polarised EMFs, often from multiple sources

concurrently, factoring in a probably infinite and unpredictable variety of frequencies, power density levels, modulations, and pulsation patterns.

- 4) Be set so as to fully protect vulnerable individuals, including pregnant women and fetuses, infants and children, the sick, the elderly, and electrically-sensitised individuals.
- 5) Be set so as to fully protect animals, plants, and the environment.

Ofcom has the flexibility to either prioritise public health - through the adoption of biologically-based and precautionary EMF exposure levels, or commercial/military interests - through the adoption of ICNIRP's Guidelines. Sadly, it has chosen the latter, based on the conflicted official advice, such as that provided by PHE, and COMARE (Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment).

COMARE, the Department of Health and Social Care committee which provides '*provides independent advice to all government departments and agencies*' [2], and which originally concentrated on ionising radiation, took over responsibility for non-ionising radiation when the former Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation (AGNIR) was disbanded in May 2017. Since then, COMARE's key advisor on EMFs has been Dr Simon Mann, who is, or who has been:

- An ICNIRP Scientific Expert Group member [1]
- The Secretary of the former AGNIR [1]
- A member of the former National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) [3]
- Group Leader of EMF Dosimetry at the former Health Protection Agency (HPA) [4]
- An Investigator of the National Institute for Health Research Health Protection Research Unit (NIHR HPRU) in Health Impact of Environmental Hazards [5]
- A member of the World Health Organisation RF EHC Core Group, which is coordinating the preparation of an Environmental Health Criteria monograph on radiofrequency electromagnetic fields [6]
- A member of the IARC Working Group which prepared the 2013 Monograph on the carcinogenicity of radiofrequency electromagnetic fields [6]
- A member of the Bioelectromagnetics Society (BEMS) and of the European Bioelectromagnetics Association (EBEA) [6]
- A member of BSI GEL106 technical standards committee on Human Exposures to Electromagnetic Fields [6]
- A member of the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) [6]
- Head of Radiation Dosimetry Department in PHE's Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards [6]
- A PHE Secretariat advisor to COMARE [6]
- A UK delegate to the CENELEC TC106X Committee (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization - Electromagnetic fields in the human environment) [7]

He wears many hats. Or, to put it another way, Dr Mann is a central figure in numerous influential EMF organisations, both in the UK, and internationally. His membership of ICNIRP would require total commitment to its thermally-based Guidelines and ideology, which states that detrimental non-thermal effects have not been 'established'.

The advice that COMARE receives from PHE via Dr Simon Mann, and which it then dutifully relays to Government departments and agencies, is therefore anything but 'independent'. It is ICNIRP's advice, and it is based on what the U.S. National Toxicology Program, at the conclusion of its cell phone radiation studies, has described as a 'long-held assumption'. [8]

Below I show the flow of EMF advice (or, perhaps, the line of control). The only group that Dr Mann doesn't appear to work directly for is the UK Government:

ICNIRP/WHO → PHE / COMARE → UK Government Departments and Agencies (including Ofcom)

Note that ICNIRP is '*formally recognized as an official collaborating non-state actor by the World Health Organization*' [9]

As can be seen from COMARE minutes, since the disbanding of the former AGNR in 2017, the committee has considered establishing a non-ionising radiation working group ('*as part of its remit, the concept of a more proactive approach for nonionising radiation has been prioritised*'), and, more recently, it is looking to appoint a '*radiation scientist with an interest in non-ionising radiation*'. [10]

At the date of the latest available COMARE minutes, from March 2020, neither of these actions had taken place. COMARE is therefore still dependent on EMF updates and advice from Dr Simon Mann, and it still lacks an independent, non-ICNIRP, expert, who can objectively evaluate the science on non-ionising electromagnetic radiation, and perhaps even act as a counter-balance to the 'non-thermal effects have not been established' group-think of ICNIRP

Louis Slesin, Editor of Microwave News since the 1970's, recently said this:

The Lies Must Stop. Disband ICNIRP. Facts Matter, Now More Than Ever – Microwave News, April 9th 2020

Time To Clean House

This cannot go on. The first step is for ICNIRP, Mike Repacholi's bastard child, to be disbanded....Indeed, all expert committees should be broadened to include those who allow that more than RF tissue heating may be at work.

But most important: The lies and distortions must stop. Otherwise, confusion and conspiracy theories will continue to run rampant. The net result is that the entire RF research enterprise will lack credibility, which, unfortunately, is the objective of many of the leading players.

<https://www.microwavenews.com/news-center/time-clean-house>

Quite.

It is time for Ofcom to adhere to EMF Guidelines which are not set by a conflicted private club that has been widely criticised for its conflicts of interest, and for its denial of known non-thermal effects. It is time for the British people to be properly protected. Ofcom's draft licence condition and its 'Guidance on EMF Compliance and Enforcement' do absolutely nothing to help achieve this.

References

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