

# Letter to Branches

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General Secretary: Billy Hayes ([www.billyhayes.co.uk](http://www.billyhayes.co.uk))

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Date: 13 September 2007

**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

## **Mobile Telecommunications & Health Research Programme - Report on Mobile Phone Research into Possible Health risks Published**

### **Mobile Phones**

Mobile phones have not been found to be associated with any biological or adverse health effects according to the UK's largest investigation into the possible health risks from mobile telephone technology. The Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research (MTHR) Programme has published their conclusions today as part of its 2007 Report.

The six year research programme has found no association between short term mobile phone use and brain cancer. Studies on volunteers also showed no evidence that brain function was affected by mobile phone signals or the signals used by the emergency services (TETRA). The MTHR Programme Management Committee believes there is no need to support further work in this area.

The research programme also included the largest and most robust studies of electrical hypersensitivity undertaken anywhere in the world. These studies have found no evidence that the unpleasant symptoms experienced by sufferers are the result of exposure to signals from mobile phones or base stations.

The situation for longer term exposure is less clear as studies have so far only included a limited number of participants who have used their phones for 10 years or more. The committee recommends more research be conducted in this area.

The MTHR Programme also investigated whether mobile phones might affect cells and tissue beyond simply heating them. The results so far show no evidence for this and the committee believes there is no need to support further work in this area.

Professor Lawrie Challis, Chairman of MTHR stated that this is a very substantial report from a large research programme and the work reported has all been published in respected peer-reviewed scientific or medical journals. Professor Challis added that the results are so far re-assuring but there is still a need for more research, especially to check that no effects emerge from longer-term phone use from adults and from use by children.

The research programme has also funded some basic measurements of radio signals from microcell and picocell base stations such as those found in airports, railway stations and shopping malls. These have shown that exposures are well below international guidelines.

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Additional studies also confirmed that the use of a mobile phone while driving, whether hand-held or hands-free, causes impairment to performance comparable to that from other in-car distractions. There are however, indications that the distraction caused by mobile phones may be greater due to demand on concentration level.

The Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research Programme was set up in response to the research recommendations contained within the 'Stewart Report'. The research programme received approximately £8.8 million of funding from a variety of government and industry sources. To ensure the independence of the research carried out, scientific management of the programme was entrusted to an independent Programme Management Committee made up of independent experts, mostly senior university academics. Funds contributed by the sponsors of the Programme are managed on behalf of the Committee by the Department of Health as Secretariat to the Programme. The Programme was set up in 2001 and has supported 28 individual research projects, mostly undertaken in UK universities. Of these, 23 have now been completed and most have published results in scientific and medical journals (23 papers to date, with more expected in the near future). The Report 2007 summarises the state of knowledge at the time of the Stewart Report and the current state of knowledge, taking account of both research supported by the Programme and that carried out elsewhere. It also provides an indication of future research priorities.

### **Mobile Phone Masts**

BOB 030/07, Paragraphs 424 dated 17 August 2007 reported to Branches that a study by an Essex University team, published in the "Environmental Health Perspectives" journal concluded that Mobile phone masts do not cause harmful short-term health effects. The study strongly countered the notion that low-level electromagnetic fields from cellphones or base stations are dangerous. The research team were funded by the Department of Health (Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research Programme) to undertake the research study.

Professor Fox the leader of the Essex University study team stated in the report's conclusions that scientists and sufferers should now concentrate on finding the real cause of the symptoms because if people are convinced that they are suffering ill-health because of mobile phone masts they do not investigate other causes.

There are currently around 51,000 masts around the country. In cities they can be as close as 200 metres apart. Several cancer clusters have been reported but scientists have dismissed mobile masts as the cause concluding that one in three people will develop cancer in their lifetime and the clusters are due to chance. Experts are more concerned about the higher radiation dose from phones. It has been 18 years since the birth of the Mobile Phone revolution and over that period there has been continual reports regarding the fear of ill-health caused by radiation and radio-waves emitted by phones and masts.

Nevertheless, the UK has adopted a precautionary approach on radio frequencies by, among other measures, using the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) exposure guidelines for the general public. These are five times more stringent than the previous UK NRPB standards. Such standards are based on the only scientifically established effect of radio waves – the 'heating' effect. In order to reassure the public, the Radiocommunications Agency (RA) – now part of Ofcom – carries out annual surveys of radio field strength near mobile phone masts.

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These checks, at the suggestion of the Stewart Report of 2000, number about 100 a year and are carried out at schools and hospitals. So far, the highest reading Ofcom has recorded was one 279th of the UK exposure guidelines (ICNIRP). Nevertheless, this reading was unusual because the vast majority of sites Ofcom has monitored are thousands of times below the guidelines.

The mobile industry accepts the need for on-going research and the Union continues to support that position, monitoring research and keeping an open mind.

### Information Leaflets

- **Mobile phone base stations and health** - This leaflet outlines some of the measures taken to address health concerns about mobile phone service provision. The leaflet is jointly published by the Department of Health with the Scottish Executive, the Northern Ireland Executive and The National Assembly for Wales. (Copy Attached).
- **Mobile phones and health** - This leaflet offers the latest information and advice based on both current knowledge and remaining uncertainties so that people can make their own informed choices about how to use mobile phones. It also outlines further work that is under way. Mobile phones are low power devices that emit and receive radio waves. These connect each phone to a network of base stations, so that users can make and receive calls. Radio waves have been used for communication for over 100 years. But the speed with which mobile phones have become so widely used is unprecedented. This has led to public concern about their possible impact on health. (Copy Attached).

Yours sincerely,

**Dave Joyce**  
**National Health, Safety & Environment Officer**



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