

Press Release

RADIOFREQUENCIES:

Afsset recommends reducing exposure

15 October 2009

The report by the French Agency for Environmental and Occupational Health Safety (Afsset) shows that radiofrequency radiation affects cellular functions, as reported by around ten experimental studies considered by Afsset as being indisputable. Nevertheless, to date no mechanism of action has been identified between radiofrequencies and cells for non-thermal exposure levels. Likewise, the level of epidemiological proof concerning the excess risk of certain tumours remains very limited. In contrast, a significant number of studies do not report any particular effect. On the whole, the level of evidence is not sufficient to accept, as is, that the detrimental effects to health have been conclusively established. For Afsset, they constitute undeniable signals.

Faced with these doubts, Afsset considers that it is advisable to act and recommends the following:

- *Developing research to clear up remaining doubts and remain on the look-out for new emerging signals.*

Afsset recommends targeting, as a priority, epidemiological studies, as well as studies on reproduction and childhood development, while also responding to studies that display biological effects. It recommends paying particular attention to methodological aspects, and, in particular, fine-tuning the characterisation of the exposure of populations, starting with the exposure of children. It highlights the delay taken in the knowledge of health effects concerning frequency bands below 400MHz and those above 2GHz, which correspond to occupational exposures.

Other hypotheses are quashed by this expert appraisal (permeability of the haematoencephalic barrier, risk of acoustic neurinomas, effect on melatonin, etc.).

- *Reducing exposures of the public.*

There is potential to reduce the exposure to radiofrequencies. The priority goes to mobile phones which are the main source of exposure for the public. Clear labelling of the Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) would favour the least radiation-emitting mobile phones. Furthermore, Afsset recommends researching some points on the ground where levels of radiofrequency waves are clearly higher than average. It recommends mapping them and suggesting a procedure to reduce the levels. *This process is part of an environmental rationale, where, as soon as an exposure can be reduced, it must be contemplated.*

The expert appraisal carried out by Afsset is novel, not only by the complete nature of the publications analysed but also by the method and innovative approach developed in order to carry it out. The expert appraisal listed 3,500 references. The work compared diverse schools of scientific thought, from interested parties and whistle-blowers, through hearings in particular. The human sciences have been taken into account in the expert appraisal process. Finally, for the first time, an observer from the associative structures will have monitored all of the debates.

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