



## Radiation risk from everyday devices assessed

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**A new report raising concerns about the effects of electromagnetic fields (EMF) on human health calls for tougher safety standards to regulate radiation from mobile phones, power lines and many other sources of exposure in daily life. The report, 'Bioinitiative: A Rationale for a Biologically-Based Public Exposure Standard for Electromagnetic Fields' was compiled by the Bioinitiative Working Group, an international group of scientists, researchers and public health policy professionals. The EEA has contributed to this new report with a chapter drawn from the EEA study 'Late lessons from early warnings: the precautionary principle 1896–2000' published in 2001.**

The EEA study reviews the histories of a selection of public and environmental hazards, such as asbestos, benzene and PCBs, from the first scientifically based early warnings about potential harm, to subsequent precautionary and preventive measures. Cases on tobacco smoking and lead in petrol are forthcoming.

Although the EEA does not have specific expertise in EMF, the case studies of public hazards analysed in the '[Late lessons](#)' publication show that harmful exposures can be widespread before there is both 'convincing' evidence of harm from long-term exposures, and biological understanding of how that harm is caused.

'There are many examples of the failure to use the precautionary principle in the past, which have resulted in serious and often irreversible damage to health and environments. Appropriate, precautionary and proportionate actions taken now to avoid plausible and potentially serious threats to health from EMF are likely to be seen as prudent and wise from future perspectives. We must remember that precaution is one of the principles of EU environmental policy,' says Professor Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director of the EEA.

Current evidence, although limited, is strong enough to question the scientific basis for the present EMF exposure limits, according to the Bioinitiative Working Group.

### Links:

[Late lessons from early warnings: the precautionary principle 1896–2000](#)

[The Bioinitiative Working Group report](#)

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