



EMF-CEM

HEALTH: STOP RADIATION

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Mobile Towers: Government decides to cut radiation limits to a tenth from September 1

INDIA Nandan Jha Durgesh Nandan Jha, TNN 18 JUL, 2012

If you are worried by the radiation emitted by cellphone towers around you, there is some good news. From September 1 this year, India will lower the level to one tenth of the prevailing standard - from 9.2 w/m² (Watt per square metre) to 0.92 w/m². The decision follows a report of the inter-ministerial committee formed by the ministry of communications and information technology to study the hazards posed by EMF (ElectroMagnetic Field) radiation from base stations and mobile phones.

Dr R S Sharma, deputy director general of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), who represented the health ministry on the committee, said the new norms will place India among the more radiation conscious countries.

"India's current radiation exposure limit (9.2 watt/m²) for mobile towers is higher than countries like Russia (0.2 w/m²) and China (0.4 w/m²). In USA, Canada and Japan, however, the radiation exposure limit is much higher (12 w/m²)," he said. Sharma said lowering of the limit is a preventive step against serious health risks posed by radiation emitted from towers which includes the possibility of developing certain types of cancer. The cause and effect relationship though hasn't been established yet. [[Mechanisms linked to exposure to ElectroMagnetic Fields by Dr Richard Gautier](#)]

The department of telecommunications has also issued directions for reducing the [Specific Absorption Rate \(SAR\)](#), a measure of the amount of radiofrequency energy absorbed by the body while using a phone. In May last year, WHO classified radiofrequency EMF associated with a wireless phone as 'possibly carcinogenic to humans'.

The UN's health body urged phone owners to restrict their use and take pragmatic steps to reduce exposure like use of hands-free devices and texting.

The telecom operators are, however, resisting the move. According to Rajan S Mathews, director general of Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), lowering of EMF limits will give no health benefits but affect services.

"Deteriorated coverage will mean the handset will have to work harder/at a higher power which will cause greater personal exposure. Also, if the handset operates at a higher power, the battery will discharge faster, giving consumers lesser talktime/standby time, leading to a degraded customer experience," said Mathews. He said more towers would then be needed to plug the gaps, which will increase the overall EMF. He said the rollout of 3G and broadband services will also get adversely affected.

Telecom companies argue that the steps are not needed as there is no proof of a direct correlation between the radiation emitted by cellphone towers and phones and health.

Delhi health minister A K Walia recently held a meeting with scientists from ICMR and JNU, besides others, where it was decided to impose stringent norms for installation of cellphone towers in residential areas. "We are also talking to the union government to make radiation level tags mandatory for different brand of handsets," Walia told TOI. [[12 Basic Precautions](#)]