



WHO calls for measures to deal with electromagnetic waves

KYODO TSUKUBA, Japan, June 17, 2007.

The World Health Organization has urged its member nations to take measures against emissions of ultra low-frequency electromagnetic waves such as those from power lines, citing the possible link between the emissions and infant leukemia, a source close to the organization said Sunday.

In its first international guidelines on the long-term influence of electromagnetic waves on human health, the WHO called on countries to establish laws to reduce such exposure, the source said.

Although the WHO did not set specific numerical figures for the reduction, it supported U.S. and Japanese epidemiology studies which said that the risk of developing childhood leukemia will double if children are constantly exposed to more than an average 0.3-0.4 microtesla.

While saying that direct causal relation between electromagnetic waves and health damage has not been recognized, the WHO concluded that a link cannot be denied and that preventive measures are needed.

The guidelines are likely to put pressure on Japan which has no regulations concerning the influence of electromagnetic waves on human bodies. Earlier this month, the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry set up a working group to consider regulating ultra-low frequency magnetic fields located around power lines.

The WHO is expected to officially release the guidelines as early as Monday.

According to the WHO, electronic devices which emit strong electromagnetic waves when they are used include hair driers, electric shavers, vacuum cleaners and kitchen microwaves.

A kitchen microwave emits 4-8 microtesla in a 30-centimeter distance while a television emits 0.01-0.15 microtesla when people are within a 1-meter distance.

In the international guidelines, the WHO mentioned preventive measures seen in such countries as Italy and the Netherlands where a certain distance is secured between high-voltage power lines and residential districts, or schools and other facilities.

It also recommended labeling electromagnetic wave levels on electronic devices, such as electric carpets.

The WHO has been conducting research on the influence of electromagnetic waves on human bodies since 1996 following reports that areas near high-voltage power lines have seen many cases of childhood leukemia.

It is also working on electromagnetic waves with shorter wavelengths which are emitted from mobile phones and other devices. It is planning to compile a report on the result of the work as early as next year.

Kyodo

EHS TV news : [Video Report](#) Associated with the document *(French)*.

- Extract / TV France5 Video report : [Interview Pr André AURENGO](#) *(French)*.