

## News

# 'Mobile phone mast has caused 27 deaths', say residents

10 november 2006

A mobile phone mast has caused 27 deaths and illnesses to people living close by, terrified residents said yesterday.

They believe the 82ft antenna emits potentially lethal microwaves and is responsible for a cluster of cancer cases over the last 13 years, some of which had proved fatal.

Families living in three streets are spending hundreds of pounds trying to protect themselves from what they believe are killer radiation rays.

They are lining their lofts and walls with tin foil, putting up metal mesh curtains and installing specialist windows.



Families living in three streets are spending hundreds of pounds trying to protect themselves from what they believe are killer radiation rays



The mast - owned by mobile phone giant Orange - was erected in Shooters Hill in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs, in 1993.

Since then there has been seven deaths and 20 illnesses, which locals claim is linked to the towering structure dominating the skyline.

Four people, including neighbours Elsie Jones, Yvonne Greensmith and Freda Oakes, have died from brain haemorrhages, all within three years of each other.

Three other residents have succumbed to cancer, among them John Cornes and John Butler, who died from a brain tumour.

Four non-fatal cases of cancer have been reported, as well as three people suffering irregular heartbeats, five who have constant headaches and sleeplessness and six who have high blood pressure.

Two have also complained that their epilepsy has worsened significantly in the last ten years. The three worst affected streets are Cherrywood Grove, Sandon Road and Milward Grove, which are all just yards from the mast.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council commissioned expert tests last year to find anything that would have a negative effect on human health but they found nothing.

Orange also insist the antenna - which collects and distributes signals from other masts- is safe but there are now growing calls to have it torn down.

Mother-of-two Karen Owens, aged 40, who lives 300 feet from the mast on Milward Grove, had a double mastectomy on Tuesday after contracting cancer.

She found out she had breast cancer back in May and is now terrified sons James, five and two-year-old Harry are being harmed.

Karen said: *"Since I was diagnosed it has always been in the back of my mind that it was connected to the mast.*

*"I had some initial surgery and chemotherapy, but then I decided to have both breasts removed because I'm frightened of it coming back.*

*"The operation has been completed as expected. I feel rough but everything has gone to plan. There is no history of breast cancer in my family, and statistically I am very young to get it."*

Chris Cornes lost her husband John to cancer four years ago and now uses about 50 rolls of tin foil to line her loft and bed headboard.

Monitoring equipment apparently showed one side of her home has much more microwave radiation than the other.

Jean Hopkins, who lives within feet of the mast, suffered from headaches until spending £1,000 on precautions.

She said: "I'm not a hypochondriac and I don't make things up. Residents shouldn't have to live like this. It destroys your quality of life."

Alfred Oakes, 81, has lived on Sandon Road for 51 years. He believes the mast, which is directly opposite his home, could be responsible for his skin cancer.

Stoke-on-Trent South MP Rob Ffello wants research to see if residents' fears are justified.

He said: "I use a mobile phone, but that is my choice. People who buy a house and then a mast is put up have no choice."

Stoke-on-Trent City Council said its research the antenna was operating within national guidelines.

But opponents say the council report only looked at the possible heating effects of the microwaves, not their potential to cause biological problems, especially in the brain.

Dr Gerald Hyland, from the University of Warwick said his research revealed "quite a strong correlation" between health problems and where the beams of microwaves are strongest.

Digital mobile phone radiation operates at a similar frequency to electrical activities in the brain - and may cause sleeplessness, headaches and more serious illnesses.

Orange insist the mast will not cause any adverse affects to residents. Sue Hammett, Orange's community liaison officer said: *"The latest fact sheet from the World Health Organisation said there were no adverse long-term or short-term health effects from this low-level radiofrequency and that came out in May. "We appreciate this is a sensitive issue, but we believe our mobile phone stations are safe."*