Radio Frequency – Recent Research

Introduction

Smart meters represent one component of the advanced metering infrastructure (AMI). Smart Meters installed by Georgia Power make use of miniature, low power radio transceivers to wirelessly communicate with the electric utility. Deployment of Smart Meters has raised concerns by members of the public about possible adverse health effects that could be related to exposure to the radiofrequency (RF) signals of the meters.

California Council on Science and Technology Review

Over the past year, plans to install smart meters have been met with opposition from some customers who say that RF EMF from the meters could cause health effects. Recently controversy has escalated in Marin County, CA (near San Francisco) where on January 4, 2011 the Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance banning smart-meter installation in certain areas of that county due to health concerns.

On a state level, a California Assemblyman and fellow assemblyman requested that the California Council on Science and Technology (CCST) review the health effects of smart meters. The CCST report was released in January 2011. Quoting from the study, there are two primary conclusions:

- The FCC standard provides a currently accepted factor of safety against known thermally induced health impacts of smart meters and other electronic devices in the same range of RF emissions. Exposure levels from smart meters are well below the thresholds for such effects.
- There is no evidence that additional standards are needed to protect the public from smart meters.

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Study

Similarly, in the state of Maine, a complaint was filed with the Maine Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) on October 25, 2010 about the health effects, safety, and security issues associated with the meters. In response, the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a report on smart-meter health effects on November 8, 2010.

Public concern in the state also led the MPUC to open an investigation into whether Central Maine Power should provide an opt-out option to customers. The report concludes,

> "our review of these agency assessments and studies do not indicate any consistent or convincing evidence to support a concern for health effects related to the use of radiofrequency in the range of frequencies and power used by smart meters. They

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> also do not indicate an association of EMF exposure and symptoms that have been described as electromagnetic sensitivity."

The authors recommend that concerned parties who require a more in-depth analysis contact ICNIRP, the FCC, or RF-COM at the University of Ottawa, who "may provide potential resources for experts on the health issues related to smart meters.