



# Customer Connection

Please visit us at [www.sce.com](http://www.sce.com)

## UNDERSTANDING EMF

### ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS

Questions have been raised about the possible health effects of 60-hertz (power frequency) electric and magnetic fields (EMF\*), which are found wherever you have electric power. This article contains information that will help you understand the EMF issue, plus practical tips you can use if you want to reduce your exposure at home and at work.

#### Campos Eléctricos y Magnéticos (EMF):

Si desea recibir información en español, comuníquese con SCE al 1-800-441-2233.

**Reviewed by:** The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)

\*The term EMF in this publication refers to extremely low frequency (ELF) 60-hertz electric and magnetic fields associated with power delivered by electric utilities. It does not refer to radio frequency (RF) waves associated with wireless communications such as cell phones.

#### Can EMF Harm Your Health?

Electric and magnetic fields are present wherever electricity flows around appliances and power lines, in offices, and at schools and homes. Many researchers believe that if there is a risk of adverse health effects from usual residential exposures to EMF, it is probably just at the detection limit of human health studies; nonetheless, the possible risk warrants further investigation. The varying results from epidemiological studies, which looked at estimated EMF exposures and childhood leukemia, are consistent with a weak link. Laboratory studies, including studies investigating a possible mechanism for health effects (mechanistic studies), provide little or no evidence to support this weak link.

The results from many research studies have been evaluated by international, national, and California EMF research programs to determine whether EMF poses any health risk. Given the uncertainty of the issue, the medical and scientific communities have been unable to conclude that usual residential exposures to EMF cause health effects, or to establish any standard or level of residential exposure that is known to be either safe or harmful. These conclusions remain unchanged by recent studies.

#### World Health Organization Findings

The World Health Organization (WHO) completed a review of the potential health implications of extremely low frequency (ELF) EMF, which includes power-frequency fields. Their conclusions and recommendations were presented in June 2007 in a report known as the *Extremely Low Frequency Fields, Environmental Health Criteria Monograph No. 238*.

The WHO report concluded that evidence for a link between ELF magnetic fields and childhood leukemia "is not strong enough to be considered causal but sufficiently strong to remain a concern." "Virtually all of the laboratory evidence and the mechanistic evidence fail to support" this reported association. For all other diseases, there is inadequate or no evidence of health effects at low exposure levels.

The report emphasized that, given the weakness of the evidence for health effects, the health benefits of exposure reduction are unclear and adopting policies based on arbitrary low exposure limits is not warranted. In light of this situation, WHO made these and other recommendations:

- \* National authorities should implement communication programs with all stakeholders to enable informed decision-making, including how individuals can reduce their own exposure.
- \* Policy makers and community planners should implement very low-cost measures to reduce exposures when constructing new facilities and designing new equipment, including appliances.
- \* Policy makers should establish guidelines for ELF field exposure for both the general public and workers. The best source of guidance for both exposure levels and the principles of scientific review are the international guidelines.
- \* Government and industry should promote research to reduce the uncertainty of the scientific evidence on the health effects of ELF field exposure. Several recommended research projects are already under way through the Electric Power Research Institute, of which SCE is a member.

To view the full report and a fact sheet summarizing it, visit [www.who.int/peh-emf/publications/elf\\_ehc/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/peh-emf/publications/elf_ehc/en/index.html) [www.who.int/peh-emf/publications/facts/fs322/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/peh-emf/publications/facts/fs322/en/index.html)

Magnetic Fields at Home (Measurements are in milligauss.)			
	1.2' away	12' away	36' away
Microwave Oven	750 to 2,000	40 to 80	3 to 8
Clothes Washer	8 to 400	2 to 30	0.1 to 2
Electric Range	60 to 2,000	4 to 40	0.1 to 1
Compact Fluorescent Bulb	0 to 32.8	0 to 0.1	0
Hair Dryer	60 to 20,000	1 to 70	0.1 to 3
LCD/Plasma TV	1.1 to 73.6	0 to 2.5	0 to 2.2

Source: Adapted from Gauger 1985 & EPA Appliance Measurement Study 2010.

Magnetic Fields Outside (Maximum values may be lower for some California utilities.)	
Distribution Lines	1 to 80 milligauss under the line
Transmission Lines	1 to 300 milligauss edge of right-of-way

EMF continued on back