



Mast Sanity Press Release 12th October 2007 **HPA Wi-fi 'Research' Smokescreen**

Mast Sanity welcome the announcement from the UK's Health Protection Agency (HPA) that more research is to be done into Wi-Fi. However the tone of the Press Release^[1] and its timing at the end of a Conference promoting devices which mainly use Wi-fi for School use^[5] suggests that this is merely a smokescreen to appear to be doing something without actually doing anything new. It also appears to fall well short of Sir William Stewart's recent request for an enquiry into Wi-Fi in schools.^[2]

Mast Sanity ask:

1) What is this 'research' going to be about?

Are the HPA only taking measurements of Wi-fi signal levels (as they state in their press release)? Or are they going to look to see if there are any health effects on children in schools by taking blood samples, measuring heart rates and brain response (EEG's) and doing health surveys?

We already know what the levels emitted from the Wi-fi laptops and routers are. OFCOM (one of the HPA's 'partner' Agencies) has already taken measurements in schools.^[11]

Powerwatch have already done this^[8] as have various campaign groups. It is no mystery.

Mast Sanity spokesperson Yasmin Skelt says "***Surely the HPA aren't saying that we have had a situation in the UK where we have had Wi-fi in some schools for years and yet the HPA and hence the UK Government have had no idea of the radiation levels? That beggars belief. This is precisely why we have been calling on Wi-fi to be turned off and removed from schools.***"

2) The HPA are still going to compare the levels with the outdated ICNIRP guidelines.

We know that the ICNIRP guidelines only protect against short term heating effects and are not appropriate to protect against cancer and genetic damage over the long-term. This was highlighted in the recent Bioinitiative Report^[3].

Sir William Stewart also said the World Health Organisation (WHO) are wrong in their evaluation of the science behind the guidelines^[5] and the Stewart report^[4] said that relying solely on the guidelines will not protect people from biological (non-heating) effects that may become apparent.

Mast Sanity spokesperson Yasmin Skelt says "***Independent Scientific studies have consistently shown health effects from microwave emissions well below currently allowed levels^[3,6,7] - so what is the point of comparing emissions against these outdated ICNIRP guidelines?***"

3) There is the 'Main Beam' (highest emissions) issue.

The Department of Education guidelines state that a school should not be in the main beam of a Mobile Phone Mast.^[4]

The microwave radiation intensity in a classroom with Wi-fi is the same order of magnitude as if the schools were in the main beam of a mobile phone mast.^[2]

Mast Sanity spokesperson Yasmin Skelt says "***The current Department of Education guidelines say that children shouldn't be in an area of high microwave emissions - So why are they putting more Wi-fi devices in schools? Especially if the Health Protection Agency have no idea of the radiation levels - it is scandalous. The HPA***

announcement appears to be just a smokescreen!"

4) The German government is already advising its citizens to use wired internet connections instead of Wi-Fi, and landlines instead of mobile phones^[9]. Why isn't the HPA doing the same?

Also the Executive Director of the EU's European Environment Agency said last month that, "it would be prudent for health authorities to recommend actions to reduce exposures, especially to vulnerable groups, such as children." The Agency called for immediate action to reduce exposure to radiation from Wi-Fi, mobile phones and their masts. It suggests that delay could lead to a health crisis similar to those caused by asbestos and smoking^[10].

Mast Sanity spokesperson Yasmin Skelt says "**Again, why is the HPA happy to increase Wi-fi use in schools when it says it knows little about its health effects - in effect our children are guinea pigs for its own research.**"

END.

Please contact us if you have any questions on any of the above.

The Mast Sanity Press Office can be contacted on 08704 867 807.

Notes and References:

[1] Health Protection Agency announces further research into use of WiFi - http://www.hpa.org.uk/hpa/news/articles/press_releases/2007/071012_wifi.htm

"Health Protection Agency announces further research into use of WiFi

The Agency is to carry out a systematic programme of research into wireless local area networks (WLANs) and their use. This will include measurements of exposures from the Wireless Fidelity (WiFi) network and is part of the Agency's ongoing programme of work in the area of electromagnetic fields.

Professor Pat Troop, Chief Executive of the Health Protection Agency said: "There is no scientific evidence to date that WiFi and WLANs adversely affect the health of the general population. The signals are very low power, typically 0.1 watt (100 milliwatts) in both the computer and the router (access point) and the results so far show exposures are well within ICNIRP guidelines. Given this, there is no particular reason why schools and others should not continue to use WiFi or other wireless networks. However there has not been extensive research into what people's exposures actually are to this new technology and that is why we are initiating this new programme of research and analyses. We have good scientific reasons to expect the results to be reassuring and we will publish our findings."

WiFi is becoming increasingly widely used in homes, schools, offices and throughout the general working and public environments. People using WiFi, or in proximity to WiFi equipment, are exposed to the radio signals emitted from it and will absorb some of the transmitted energy. From existing information, it would appear that levels of exposure are considerably less than the guideline levels of the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation (ICNIRP) and recommended by the Health Protection Agency for use in the UK. Nevertheless, the Agency considers that WiFi exposure assessment is an area that requires further work.

Given the precautionary advice from England's Chief Medical Officer and from the Health Protection Agency to discourage the non-essential use of mobile phones by children, it is logical to consider the use of WiFi in schools and in the home. Because of the diversity of available WiFi equipment and the variety of ways in which it might be used, the precise quantification of exposures from WiFi equipment is complex and requires a carefully thought-out approach to assessment.

Following some preliminary work, the Agency now proposes to undertake a research project to measure exposures to radio signals from wireless computer networks. The results will be compared with established international exposure guidelines and also with exposures from other commonly used sources of radio signals, including mobile phones. Discussions are underway with partner Agencies, especially those in the Education sector, regarding the practicalities of carrying out the research.

The findings from the investigation will be published on the Agency's website and submitted for publication in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. The results of the study, and of other studies on radio signals and health, will be used as the basis for a wider health risk review."

[2] Panorama Transcript - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/6683969.stm>

[3] The Bioinitiative Report - <http://www.bioinitiative.org>

[4] The Government's expert group on mobile phones recommendation, from the leaflet Department of Health Leaflet: Mobile phones and health

- Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones Report "The Stewart Report"
<http://www.iegmp.org.uk/>

- Department of Health Leaflet: Mobile phones and health
http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4123979

[5] Hand Held Learning Conference 2007 - <http://mastsanity.org/handheldlearning>

[6] Ecolog Report - Mobile Telecommunications and Health - Review of the Current Scientific Research in view of Precautionary Health Protection, Ecolog-Institute April 2000 - sponsored by T-Mobil (Translated from German into English by Andrea Klein 2007) - <http://www.hese-project.org/hese-uk/en/niemr/ecologsum.php>

[7] Joining the Dots - Overview of Public Health Trends in Australia - http://www.mastsanity.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=169&Itemid=1

[8] Powerwatch on Wi-fi <http://www.powerwatch.org.uk/wifi.asp>

[9] The German government is already advising its citizens to use wired internet connections instead of Wi-Fi, and landlines instead of mobile phones - <http://www.hese-project.org/hese-uk/en/niemr/bundesregierung.php>

[10] Europe's top environmental watchdog is calling for immediate action to reduce exposure to radiation from Wi-Fi, mobile phones and their masts. It suggests that delay could lead to a health crisis similar to those caused by asbestos, smoking and lead in petrol. Professor Jacqueline McGlade, the EEA's executive director, said yesterday: "*Recent research and reviews on the long-term effects of radiations from mobile telecommunications suggest that it would be prudent for health authorities to recommend actions to reduce exposures, especially to vulnerable groups, such as children.*" - <http://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/radiation-risk-from-everyday-devices-assessed> and http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/2/story.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=10463870

[11] OFCOM's AY4434 - 2.4GHz Monitoring Exercise- <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/static/archive/ra/topics/research/topics/other/2-4ghzbandmonitoring.pdf>

The Mast Sanity Press Office can be contacted on 08704 867 807.

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Calling for Environmentally and Biologically safe communications networks and radio frequency devices