

<b>Health and Safety Executive</b>		<b>Operational Circular</b>	
		<b>OC 497/2</b>	
<b>Cancellation Date</b>	09/03/2011	<b>Open Government Status</b>	Fully Open
<b>Version No &amp; Date</b>	1:09/03/2001	<b>Author Unit/Section</b>	Health Unit

To  
 AFQ Inspectors (Bands 0-4)  
 Specialist Group Inspectors (Radiation) (Bands 1-2)  
 All HID Inspectors (Bands 0-4)

**MOBILE PHONES AND HEALTH: GUIDANCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

This OC informs inspectors about leaflets published by the Department of Health on the safe use of mobile phones and mobile phone base stations.

**BACKGROUND**

1. The Government, in 1999, asked the National Radiological Protection Board to set up the Independent Expert Group on Mobile Phones (IEGMP) chaired by Sir William Stewart. This was in response to public concern over alleged health risks from the use of mobile phones and associated base stations.
2. The Group’s report was published on 11 May 2000; it concluded that mobile phones comply with NRPB guideline levels on exposure to non-ionising electromagnetic radiation.
3. The main conclusions of the Stewart report are:  
 ‘The balance of evidence does not suggest mobile phone technologies put the health of the general public of the UK at risk. There is some preliminary evidence that outputs from mobile phones technologies may cause, in some cases, subtle biological effects, although, importantly, these do not necessarily mean that health is affected..... a precautionary approach should be adopted until more robust scientific information becomes available’.
4. The report then makes detailed recommendations on what that precautionary approach should be and what further research should be undertaken.
5. The text of the report can be viewed on the Group’s web site at [www.iegmp.org.uk](http://www.iegmp.org.uk)

**OCCUPATIONAL USE OF MOBILE PHONES**

6. The report, at [paragraph 1.61](#), states that Government should circulate a leaflet to every household in the UK providing clearly understandable information on mobile phone technology and on related health aspects, including the use of mobile phones while driving. The outcome of this recommendation is the publication of 2 leaflets published on 8 December 2000 by the Dept of Health.

1) [Mobile phones and health](#); and

## 2) [Mobile phone base stations and health](#)

Both of these leaflets are in file 559.

7. HSE do not propose to issue separate guidance. The leaflets include advice for employers and employees on the use of mobile phones which logically follows on from the advice to the public. The mobile phone leaflet states:

'Mobile phones are often used at work. They can have benefits for safety, efficiency and convenience of employers and staff. Employers have legal duties to protect the health and safety of their employees. The Health and Safety Executive advises employers that they should instruct staff not to use mobile phones while driving, or doing anything else where safety is important and their use might interfere with concentration.'

Where employers require staff to use a mobile phone, and concerns about possible health impacts are raised, employers could respond by, for example:

- explaining that mobile phones operate within international guidelines
- giving staff a copy of this leaflet
- discussing with concerned staff ways to reduce mobile phone use.'

8. Separate guidance on safe driving and the use of mobile phones has been published by DETR in their leaflet [Mobile phones and driving](#) (file 200) (product code T/INF/451). This includes advice to employers that it may be an offence, under the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, reg.104 to ask staff to use a mobile phone whilst driving. Copies of the leaflet are available from DETR Free Literature, PO Box 236, Wetherby, LS23 7NB, tel: 0870 1226 236.

### ACTION BY INSPECTORS

9. Inspectors should tell enquirers of the existence of the leaflets and, in particular, the specific section on use of mobile phones at work in the *Mobile phones and health* leaflet. Copies of the leaflets will be available from various outlets including mobile phone retailers, manufacturers, the system operating companies and public libraries. A limited stock will also be available at GPs' surgeries.
10. Where employers have not taken the actions recommended in the 'at work' section, inspectors should consider taking action under MHSWR regs. 10 and 13 requiring them to provide information and training to their employees. This should be based on the 'at work' guidance given in the leaflet.
11. Where enquiries concern mobile phone base stations then the guidance given in [SIM 3/2001/02](#) *Electromagnetic fields in the telecommunications sector* should be followed, and enquirers advised on the existence of the base station leaflet.

### ENQUIRIES AND ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR INSPECTORS

12. In FOD, inspectors requiring further information on mobile phones and health should contact Health Unit, Edinburgh, VPN: 520 2000. For further information on base stations, inspectors should consult the Engineering and Utilities Sector at Nottingham,

VPN: 513 2800.

13. FOD inspectors requiring advice on the safety of using mobile phones whilst driving should contact Safety Unit, Manchester, VPN: 516 8200.
14. General guidance on non-ionising electromagnetic fields and radiations is given in [OC 497/1](#)

First Issued: 9 March 2001  
(220/FOD/1077/2000)  
Disc: J:\editors\intranet\ocfiles\497\_2.lwp

