

INTERNATIONAL PRECEDENTS REGARDING HIGH VOLTAGE POWER LINES

The Myth:

Sufficient legislation, standards and guidelines exist in Canada to protect Canadians from the documented health effects of overhead high voltage power lines.

The Facts:

- Canada lacks legislation and meaningful standards regarding the health effects of electromagnetic fields (EMFs) emitted by overhead high voltage power lines. Canadians are forced to look at precedents established by other countries that are taking the health of their citizens seriously. Wu (2005) compiled an extensive review of such precedents, and Neesen et al. (2009) collected similar data. A few of their important findings follow.
- By law, electricity transmission companies in Germany must consider burying, and in Austria must bury, high voltage power lines within 200m of single houses and 400m of residential areas.
- Spain, Sweden and the U.K. have a legally binding framework regarding EMFs. The Madrid regional government passed regulations in 1998 which prohibited construction of overhead high voltage power lines near residential areas, schools and public gardens and proposed to eliminate existing overhead lines in metropolitan areas. Sweden became the first country to adopt the principle of prudent avoidance and prohibits overhead high voltage power lines near schools, residential areas, hospitals and daycare centres (advisory limit of 2 milliGauss [mG]). In 2002, the U.K.'s National Radiological Protection Board called for the government to require homes to be built at least 150m away from overhead high voltage power lines or require them to be buried. Construction of new power lines through residential neighborhoods in the U.K. requires the express permission of the Secretary of State.

- Three regions of Italy have imposed regulations limiting the magnetic fields of power lines being erected near schools, houses and any other places where people spend more than 4 hours per day to no more than 2mG. The Italian Constitutional Court has held these regulations to be legally binding.



- Overhead high voltage power lines are prohibited from being located within a specified buffer zone near residential areas, schools, daycare centres, youth camps or playgrounds in Connecticut. Many other U.S. states have similar prohibitions or guidelines.
- Citizens' Initiative No. 4-90 in Whatcom County, Washington in 1990 was the first successful power line referendum in the U.S., and succeeded in restricting overhead power lines exceeding 115kV to industrial areas only.

For information on what you can do go to www.reta.ca

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