

Executive Summary

The main objective of this progress report is to summarise the work of the Working Group on Electric and Magnetic Fields since its formation in early 1993 to closely monitor and review the development of international guidelines on limits of exposure to power frequencies electric and magnetic fields (EMF) emanating from high-voltage electricity current carrying conductor, such as overhead power lines, with a view to serve as an independent authoritative body to advise on power frequencies EMF - related issues in Hong Kong.

Since its formation in early 1993, the Working Group has been actively performing its duties and up to now five meetings were held to interchange and discuss relevant information collected and shared among members. A micro-computer based EMF information exchange and epidemiological studies database has been made available by the China Light and Power Co. Ltd. (CLP) from the Electricity Supply Association of Australia. The database is updated and circulated to members of the Working Group on a regular basis. The two local power companies have been encouraged to carry out field measurements on their installations to ensure that the internationally recognised EMF exposure limits promulgated by the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) and adopted by the Hong Kong Government should not be exceeded for both the general public as well as their employees. In that respect, a joint field measurement exercise attended by representatives of the two power companies and Government was arranged to demonstrate how the work was actually conducted on site. On publicity matters, the Working Group had contributed to the publicity pamphlet entitled "Understanding EMF" published by CLP and the production of a video on this topic.

While the Working Group noted hitherto that there is no conclusive scientific evidence of any adverse health effects on the normal individual arising from exposure to such power frequencies EMF, and considered that the current IRPA guidelines adopted in Hong Kong are appropriate, it will continue to monitor the developments in this aspect cautiously.

(Note : The term EMF used in this progress report refers to power frequencies electric and magnetic fields of extremely low values which fall within the IRPA guidelines)