

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4502

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John Howard, M.D., M.P.H., J.D., LL.M.  
Director, NIOSH  
Hubert H. Humphrey Bldg.  
200 Independence Ave., SW  
Room 715H  
Washington, DC 20201  
(202) 401-6997

Sidney C. Soderholm, PhD  
NORA Coordinator  
NIOSH/OD, Room 733G  
200 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Howard and Dr. Soderholm:

With the Digital Age upon us, more and more Americans find themselves in workplaces equipped with state of the art technologies. New innovations hold exciting potential for industries across occupational fields. For example, businesses throughout my home state of Vermont are proof that new technologies can increase the ability of businesses, even in small and rural areas, to compete in an increasingly global market. Nonetheless, we must be sure that as we implement and use new technological advancements to our advantage, we do so carefully, without losing site of the potential risks involved.

There is a growing concern among the American public about the potential adverse health effects of long-term, continuous exposure to environmental levels of radiofrequency radiation (RFR) and electromagnetic fields (EMF) – particularly, exposure that is directly linked to the absorption of harmful waves from everyday use of commonplace technologies, such as, cell phones and other digital and electronic devices. Of special concern, is the increasing number of schools that are being equipped with wireless internet connections and cell phone towers. There are few experts in position to give informed consent about these workplace hazards, including giving information to the parents whose children spend many hours a day in these electronic environments.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is currently in the process of setting its research priorities for the next ten years of its National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) program. The 2006 NIOSH report on the NORA program has established that the NORA team has aptly outlined the rationale for calling attention to and informing the public of the possible harms from EMF and RFR exposure. We should

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take this opportunity and dedicate money to fund the next ten years of research into the possible harms of EMF and RFR exposures in the workplace.

Science has yet to establish the exposure levels at which biological effects from low-intensity, long-term EMF and RFR exposures occur. Moreover, it is yet to be determined at what point biological effects from prolonged exposure can have long-term health implications. Workers have little voice in determining the equipment which their occupations require them to use. And, electronic and wireless devices are standard across all occupational sectors. Many employers, including the United States Congress, use cell phones, Trios, Blackberries and other wireless devices on a daily basis as common business practice. Yet, there is no other US federal research program examining the public health implications of this increasingly ubiquitous workplace trend. For these reasons, NIOSH should include long-term, continuous occupational exposure to low-intensity EMFs and RF radiation as a top priority throughout the next ten years of its NORA program.

Please keep me informed of research you are conducting regarding the issues I have raised.

Sincerely,

  
PATRICK LEAHY  
U.S. Senator