



High-Voltage Transmission Lines, Electric Substations, Public Health and Environment

Scientific Evidence, Regulatory Gaps, and Policy Recommendations for Protecting People, Agriculture and Wildlife

This report reviews key scientific evidence on the health and environmental effects associated with extremely low-frequency electromagnetic fields (ELF-EMFs) generated by high-voltage transmission lines, substations, and other electrical grid infrastructure. It examines research on cancer, childhood leukemia, neurodegenerative disease, reproductive health, biological mechanisms, occupational exposure, wildlife, agriculture, and ecosystems. There are enough studies linking EMF exposure to adverse health effects that hundreds of scientists have called for reducing exposure. While not every study has reported harmful effects, the overall body of evidence is substantial enough to warrant a risk mitigation approach.

This report also compares U.S. policies with those adopted in other countries, identifies deficiencies in the current U.S. regulatory framework, and presents some key recommendations for federal, state, and local policymakers to better protect public health and the environment while improving transparency, monitoring, and decision-making for future electric transmission projects.

Without health-based safety standards, how can new high-voltage transmission lines and substations be approved?

In the absence of federal health-based standards, and in the face of a growing body of scientific evidence of harm, decision makers should not and cannot assume that compliance with engineering guidelines demonstrates protection of public health or the environment. Where substantial scientific evidence exists, decision makers have an obligation to independently evaluate those impacts and determine whether the proposed facilities are in the public interest.

This report is not an exhaustive review of the scientific literature. It is intended to answer a common question: Are there peer-reviewed studies reporting harmful effects from EMF exposure? It also examines how other countries are responding to the science, what policies they have adopted to reduce exposure, where the United States falls behind, and how we can build a more protective, health-based approach to EMF regulation.



Report Contents:

[Executive Summary](#)

The Scientific Basis for Concern: Why the United States Still Lacks Comprehensive Health-Based EMF Standards

- [Notable scientific reviews and reports on EMF over the years](#)
- [The U.S. EPA's abandoned effort to develop health-based EMF safety standards](#)
- [Hundreds of scientists recommend reducing public and environmental exposure](#)

Scientific Research On EMF And Human Health

- [The majority of studies link EMF exposure to a broad range of impacts.](#)
- [Studies Linking EMF to childhood leukemia and cancer.](#)
- [Industry funding has been found to impact study results.](#)
- [Children Are More Vulnerable to EMF Exposure](#)
- [Studies link EMF to Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.](#)
- [Studies link EMF to neurological impacts.](#)
- [Studies link EMF to reproductive impacts.](#)
- [Studies Link EMF to breast cancer.](#)
- [Studies on occupational exposure.](#)
- [Studies report EMF can have a range of biological effects.](#)
- [EMF can act systemically with other toxic exposures.](#)

Ecological Impacts of Transmission Lines

- [EMF Has Been Found To Impact Animals And Their Habitat.](#)
 - [Studies on EMF, flora and fauna](#)
 - [Studies on high-voltage power lines, EMFs, and bees](#)
 - [EMFs may increase effects of pesticides and other stressors on bees](#)
 - [EMF can affect fish development and reproduction.](#)
 - [EMF and the endocrine system: implications for agriculture, especially dairy cows](#)
 - [Studies find stray voltage and electrical disturbances can affect dairy cattle](#)
 - [Studies find power line EMFs can affect dogs, deer, and other large mammals.](#)
 - [Biological Effects of High-Voltage Transmission Line EMFs on Plants](#)
- [Stray voltage, electrical disturbances and interference](#)
 - [Studies find stray voltage and electrical disturbances can affect dairy cattle](#)
 - [Transmission Lines Cause AC Interference with Buried Pipelines](#)
- [Transmission lines can impact biodiversity through their construction and operation](#)
- [High-voltage power lines and birds: EMFs, collisions, and electrocution](#)
 - [The United States Lacks a Comprehensive Federal Framework to Protect Birds from Power Lines](#)
 - [Many Countries Require Bird-Safe Power Line Designs—The U.S. Does Not](#)

- [Publications on Bird Electrocutions and Effective Mitigation Strategies](#)
- [High-Voltage Transmission Lines Emit Corona Discharge, Audible Noise, and Ozone](#)
- [High-voltage transmission lines and substations pose a fire risk.](#)

The US Lacks A Regulatory Framework To Protect Public Health

- [Key Deficiencies in the U.S. Regulatory Framework](#)
- [Countries That Have Implemented Measures To Protect Public Health](#)
- [US State Power-Frequency EMF Policies and Permitting Requirements](#)
- [Comparison of Health-Based Magnetic Field Levels and Regulatory Limits](#)
- [Local U.S. Government Policies That Are More Protective Than State Requirements](#)

Policy Recommendations

- [Federal Regulatory Reform Recommendations](#)
- [Policy Recommendations: Protecting Wildlife and Ecosystems](#)
- [State and Local Public Health and Siting Policy Recommendations](#)
- [Questions Policymakers and the Public Can Ask When a Power Line or Substation Is Proposed](#)

Additional Resources

- [Where can I find a list of key peer reviewed research reviews and studies to know?](#)

Executive Summary

The United States is undergoing its largest expansion of high-voltage electric transmission infrastructure in decades to support growing electricity demand of artificial intelligence and data centers. However there is no comprehensive federal framework to assess or manage health and environmental effects of long-term exposure to the electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) generated by high-voltage power lines.

This report summarizes selected scientific evidence related to EMF indicating that scientific evidence exists linking EMF exposure to biological effects. While not all studies have found effects, enough studies have that [hundreds of scientists](#) recommend reducing exposure to levels below industry guidelines. See [emfscientist.org](#).

It also summarizes current U.S. policies, and international approaches to identify gaps and recommendations for public health protections. Additional issues associated with wildfire

risk, bird electrocutions, habitat, pipeline interference, stray voltage, and noise are briefly summarized.

Key Findings

- **Scientific evidence supports a risk mitigation approach.** The majority of research has reported effects from exposure. Studies have found increased risks of childhood leukemia, adult cancers, Alzheimer's, oxidative stress, endocrine disruption, and other biological effects. The evidence on childhood leukemia was sufficient for the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) to classify extremely low-frequency EMF magnetic fields as a Group 2B Possible Human Carcinogen in 2002 and the link continues to be found in more recent studies.
- **The United States has never completed a federal health-based review of power-frequency EMFs to develop safety standards.** Although the U.S. EPA was developing health-based safety recommendations during the 1990s, its EMF health effects program was defunded before the assessment was finalized. Since then, no federal agency has assumed responsibility for developing health-based exposure standards, nor has any agency reviewed the scientific evidence, or established a comprehensive framework to protect the public from long-term EMF exposure.
- **Industry guidelines do not address long-term health risks.** IEEE and ICNIRP exposure limits often cited by power companies were developed primarily to prevent acute effects such as nerve stimulation and electric shock. They were not designed to protect against long-term outcomes including cancer or neurological disease.
- **The United States has no comprehensive federal EMF health policy.** There are no federal health-based safety standards for exposure to power-frequency EMFs, no national EMF measuring and monitoring program, no federal requirements for industry to report measurements around transmission lines or substations, no setbacks for schools or homes, and no post-construction verification program to ensure predicted EMF exposure levels are accurate.
- **Current federal and state regulations lack transparency.** In most states, utilities are generally not required to publicly disclose electric and magnetic field levels when projects are proposed, nor to prepare publicly accessible EMF maps, nor to conduct ongoing EMF monitoring for their lines.
- **Wildlife impacts extend beyond collisions and habitat loss.** Transmission infrastructure can affect wildlife through collisions, electrocution, habitat fragmentation, and also exposure to electric and magnetic fields. Research has reported effects on bird behavior and breeding density, honey bees and other pollinators, fish, amphibians, livestock, and other wildlife. Despite these findings, there is no comprehensive federal framework that evaluates or mitigates EMF-related impacts on wildlife or ecosystem health.
- **Pollinators are unprotected:** Studies have reported that EMF may alter honey bee navigation, behavior, reproduction, and colony health, particularly when combined with other environmental stressors such as pesticides.

- **Many countries have adopted precautionary policies to better protect children.** Numerous governments, including the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Israel, Denmark, Norway and Finland have implemented policies, measures or issued recommendations to reduce public exposure including protecting schools and homes with setbacks, optimizing transmission line design to reduce EMF, conducting EMF calculations before construction and publishing public guidance or EMF maps.

Policy Recommendations

This review supports modernizing U.S. policy for high voltage transmission lines, substations and other electric grid equipment by addressing EMF impacts to health and environment. Key steps include:

- Establishing a comprehensive federal regulatory framework that takes a risk mitigation approach.
- Developing health-based human and wildlife exposure limits that consider long-term exposure and vulnerable populations.
- Requiring EMF modeling and public disclosure at the beginning of project proposals.
- Conducting post-construction measurements to verify predicted exposures.
- Establishing protective siting policies for schools, homes, childcare centers, hospitals, and parks.
- Expanding research and national surveillance on EMF exposure, health and environmental outcomes.
- Incorporating wildlife and pollinator protection into transmission planning and environmental review.
- Evaluating international best practices that have successfully reduced public exposure while maintaining reliable electric infrastructure.

As the United States invests billions of dollars in expanding its electric grid, there are opportunities to improve safety and transparency to align infrastructure planning with the best available scientific evidence and international practices. Until adequate regulations are in place, governments should reduce exposure, especially for children and the medically vulnerable.

Science on Health Risks Associated with Proximity to High Voltage Lines and Electric Substations

Magnetic fields from power lines and electrical grid infrastructure can induce electric fields inside body tissues. A [significant body of research](#) reports associations with childhood leukemia, as well as adult cancers, Alzheimer's, miscarriage, hormone disruption and other adverse effects. Numerous countries have advanced [policies to restrict magnetic field EMF exposure](#) to levels below 3 or 4 mG, the levels associated with childhood leukemia.

Notable scientific reviews and reports on EMF over the years

These reports do not conclude safety but rather, they report on the complexity of the scientific research and recommend **more research**.

- **The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)** [classified](#) extremely low-frequency (ELF) magnetic fields as Group 2B, "possibly carcinogenic to humans," in 2002 based primarily on consistent epidemiological evidence associating EMF exposure in the home to increased risk of childhood leukemia. IARC's final conclusion is:
Overall, extremely low frequency magnetic fields were evaluated as possibly carcinogenic to humans (IIB), based on the statistical association of higher level residential ELF magnetic fields and increased risk for childhood leukaemia.

Over the last two decades since the WHO IARC classification, research studies in countries around the world have continued to report increased childhood leukemia.

- **National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (1998)** evaluated the research and [classified](#) ELF EMFs as possibly carcinogenic based on chronic lymphocytic leukemia associated with occupational exposure.
- **The California Department of Health (2002)** [classified](#) magnetic field EMF as at least group 2B in the states' EMF Program report. The report, "[An Evaluation of the Possible Risks From Electric and Magnetic Fields \(EMFs\) From Power Lines, Internal Wiring, Electrical Occupations and Appliances](#)" concluded that EMFs may increase risks of childhood leukemia, brain cancer, ALS, and miscarriage.
- **The Netherlands Health Council (2018/2022)** reports reaffirmed links to cancer and recommended reducing ELF-EMF. In 2013, houses under 380–220 kV lines were bought out because of the ELF EMF exposure. In 2023, the government updated its policy to prevent new situations where people stay for a long time in the area near overhead power lines and substations and where the magnetic field exceeds 4 mG.
- **The French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (2019)** published its [Report on the Health Effects of Exposure to Low-Frequency Electromagnetic Fields](#), reaffirmed the scientific evidence linking childhood leukemia to exposure and called for minimizing exposure in sensitive areas such as schools, hospitals, and for pregnant women.
- **The European Commission Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks reports (2015 and 2024 preliminary)** are often misleadingly put forward as proof of safety. While these reports do not conclude that health effects are proven, they do document numerous studies linking exposure to adverse effects and recommend more research to fully investigate various health endpoints. For example, their [2024 preliminary opinion](#) states:

"In the case of ELF-EMF and their association with childhood leukaemia, further studies are recommended, using appropriate animal models for studying acute lymphoblastic leukaemia. Moreover, more in vitro hypothesis-driven studies are needed, which can elucidate the potential interaction mechanisms of ELF-EMF at the cellular level. With

respect to all other neoplastic diseases, more epidemiological studies of adequate statistical power need to be conducted. Finally, it is important to perform further research on the quantification of the potential impact of ELF-EMF in the area of public health, also incorporating real world data. In the case of ELF-EMF and their potential impacts on flora and fauna (both terrestrial and marine), it is recommended that further studies are undertaken.”

Regarding wildlife their 2024 preliminary opinion states, “However, honeybees can also perceive ELF-EMF but with a lower sensitivity than shown for static fields. The results reviewed by Pophof et al. (2023) indicate that ‘short-time exposure to magnetic fields, at levels that could be encountered in beehives placed under power lines or during foraging flights, could affect the ability of bees to forage and pollinate crops and to respond appropriately to environmental stimuli’. Moreover, two studies with honeybees reported results of field investigations (Lupi et al., 2020; 2021) that have shown negative effects of electric and magnetic fields from power lines in combination with pesticides. Risk to pollinators was also studied in Vanbergen et al. (2019) who concluded that evidence of impacts is inconclusive, due to a lack of high-quality field studies. A recent paper by MolinaMontenegro et al. (2023) concluded “conclusive evidence of detrimental impacts of EMF on honeybee’s pollination behaviour, leading to negative effects on plant community”. At the same time three review articles by Levitt et al. (2021a,b), as well as systematic reviews by Thill et al. (2023) on impacts on insects demonstrate the research activity within this area is very active, identifying and addressing a number of research gaps.”

In short, safety is not established.

The U.S. EPA's abandoned effort to develop health-based EMF safety standards.

The United States has never established federal health-based exposure limits for the EMF exposure from power lines and substations. The history of how this occurred is important because the absence of a health-based limit does not mean the absence of scientific evidence. Rather, it reflects a federal regulatory process that was never finished and the power of the electric companies to impact science and policy.

Before Congress eliminated its funding, the EPA's robust EMF research program conducted extensive scientific research on the biological effects of non-ionizing EMFs. EPA had [released a draft report](#) that recommended designating powerline-frequency EMFs as a “probable human carcinogen” but that conclusion was deleted from the subsequently released draft, which stated EMFs was a “possible”, but not proven, cause of cancer in humans. Despite [repeated review](#) by expert agencies, the report was ultimately [shelved and never finalized](#).

The EPA's EMF research to develop health-based safety standards was fully discontinued after Congress eliminated funding. As a result, the United States never adopted any federal safety

limits for EMF nor has there been any scientific review for decades. The absence of federal EMF activities paired with limited state regulation has resulted in permitting decisions for high-voltage transmission lines relying on industry-developed engineering standards instead of health-based standards. **The limits of the IEEE and ICNIRP primarily address short-term, acute effects (such as nerve stimulation), but not effects of long-term EMF exposure health effects.** Their exposure limits are set thousands of times higher than the EMF magnetic field levels associated with childhood leukemia.

Hundreds of scientists recommend reducing public and environmental exposure

There is no consensus for safety when it comes to high voltage power lines, electric substations and other sources of EMF.

The [EMF Scientist Appeal](#) was first released in 2015 and is now signed by over 259 scientists from 41 countries who have peer-reviewed publications on electromagnetic fields. They request that the United Nations and all Member States in the World Health Organization exert strong leadership in fostering the development of more protective EMF guidelines, encouraging precautionary measures, and educating the public about health risks, particularly risk to children and fetal development.

“Based upon peer-reviewed, published research, we have serious concerns regarding the ubiquitous and increasing exposure to EMF generated by electric and wireless devices...

Numerous recent scientific publications have shown that EMF affects living organisms at levels well below most international and national guidelines. Effects include increased cancer risk, cellular stress, increase in harmful free radicals, genetic damages, structural and functional changes of the reproductive system, learning and memory deficits, neurological disorders, and negative impacts on general well-being in humans. Damage goes well beyond the human race, as there is growing evidence of harmful effects to both plant and animal life.”

The [BioInitiative Report](#) is a landmark scientific review on the biological and health effects of electromagnetic fields (EMFs) and radiofrequency (RF) radiation. It was written by [29 experts](#) from 10 countries, including 10 medical doctors and 21 PhDs, all of whom are recognized authorities in their respective fields. The authors include three former presidents and five members of the Bioelectromagnetics Society. Dr. Carl F. Blackman, for example, is a former research scientist in the Environmental Carcinogenesis Division of the US Environmental Protection Agency and served on the World Health Organization committee to evaluate the health implications of radiofrequency radiation exposure.

The updated 2012 and 2017 editions incorporated over 1,800 new peer-reviewed studies. Most of the chapters of the original 2007 BioInitiative Report were published in 2009 in the

peer-reviewed journal Pathophysiology, a respected international journal that focuses on the biological mechanisms underlying disease.

“The time for arguing whether EMF health effects exist is over. We know they exist and that they result in human disease.”

“The work of Martin Blank and Reba Goodman of Columbia University has established that stress proteins are produced by ELF-EMF and RFR at levels far below current safety standards allow. Further, they think DNA is actually a very good fractal RF-antenna which is very sensitive to low doses of EMF, and may induce the cellular processes that result in chronic ‘unrelenting’ stress. That daily environmental levels of ELF-EMF and RFR can and do throw the human body into stress protein response mode (out of homeostasis) is a fundamental and continuous insult. Chronic exposures can then result in chronic ill-health.”

A recent [2026 letter by Dr. David Carpenter](#) outlines the scientific evidence supporting strong setbacks between high-voltage transmission lines, substations, homes, and schools.



UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
State University of New York

Institute for Health and the Environment



WHO Collaborating Center
in Environmental Health

Re: Scientific Justification for Strict Setback Distances for High Voltage Transmission Lines and Substations from Homes and Schools

I am a public health physician and Director of the Institute for Health and the Environment at the University at Albany, SUNY, a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre. I have researched non-ionizing electromagnetic fields (EMFs) for over four decades. In the 1980s, I served as Executive Secretary of the New York Powerlines Project, a \$5 million study of 60 Hz magnetic fields that included research reporting an increased risk of childhood leukemia associated with elevated residential magnetic fields from power lines. I later served as New York State's spokesperson on EMF issues, Director of the Wadsworth Laboratory at the New York State Department of Health, Dean of the School of Public Health at the University at Albany and have testified before the President's Cancer Panel and the U.S. Congress on EMF and health.

Exposure to elevated power-frequency magnetic fields is associated with an increased risk of cancer, particularly childhood leukemia, as well as leukemia, brain cancer, and breast cancer in adults. The association between residential magnetic field exposure and childhood leukemia has been replicated in numerous studies conducted in multiple countries. There is also strong evidence linking long-term exposure to an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease. These are serious, often fatal diseases.

Reliance on the exposure limits of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) or International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) does not protect the public, especially children, from the health impacts of long-term exposure. There is definitive evidence in the peer-reviewed scientific literature that power-frequency EMF can produce biological effects at field strengths well below these limits. Importantly, the IEEE and ICNIRP guidelines are outdated and inadequate, as they were only designed to address short-term exposure effects and not the chronic, continuous exposures experienced by people living near high-voltage power lines for many hours each day over many years.

It is the responsibility of every government to protect its citizens from avoidable risks. In total, the scientific evidence, especially leukemia, brain and breast cancer, and Alzheimer's disease, associated with EMF exposure is sufficiently strong to warrant policy action. I urge governments to do everything in their power to mitigate the serious health risks from high-voltage transmission lines and substations by adopting protective setbacks for homes and schools and implementing evidence-based measures to minimize EMF exposures, such as undergrounding and low-EMF engineering design.

High-voltage transmission lines and electric substations should be located as far away from homes, schools, and childcare facilities as possible. I am attaching a publication that presents the scientific evidence behind these recommendations.

Yours sincerely,



David O. Carpenter, MD
Director, Institute for Health
and the Environment
University at Albany

East Campus, 5 University Place, Room A217, Rensselaer, NY 12144-3429 PH: 518-525-2660 FX: 518-525-2665 www.albany.edu/ihe

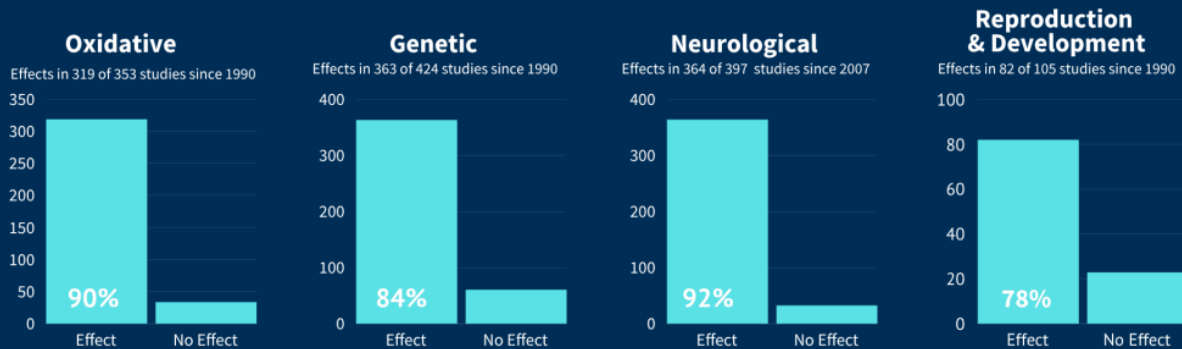
The majority of studies link EMF exposure to a broad range of impacts.

While not all studies have found effects, and [the majority have reported associations](#).



The Majority of Studies on ELF & Static Electromagnetic Fields Report Effects

Dr. Henry Lai, bioengineering professor emeritus at the University of Washington and editor-in-chief of *Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine*, finds the majority of research on EMF over the last few decades finds effects.



Dr. Lai's research compilations, last update: June 2026
from the SAFEREMR.com website of Dr. Joel Moskowitz, University of California, Berkeley



Dr. Henry Lai, [Professor Emeritus at the University of Washington](#), [Editor Emeritus](#) of the journal, *Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine*, and an emeritus member of the [International Commission on the Biological Effects of EMF](#), has compiled summaries of the research on the biological effects of exposure to radio frequency (RFR) and extremely low frequency (ELF) and static electromagnetic fields (EMF). His set of abstracts, which covers the period from 1990 constitutes a comprehensive collection of the peer-reviewed research.

Dr. Lai reports that the preponderance of research has found that exposure to RFR or ELF EMF produces oxidative effects or free radicals, and damages DNA. This information is posted on Dr. Joel Moskowitz website [SaferEMR.com](#).

Summary of Results for ELF (Last major update: June 8, 2026)

- 90% (n=313) of 353 ELF/static EMF oxidative effects (or free radical) studies published since 1990 reported significant effects.
- 84% (n=363) of 424 ELF/static EMF genetic effects studies published since 1990 reported significant effects, including 92% (n=232) of 252 studies of gene expression.
- 92% (n=364) of 397 ELF/static EMF neurological studies published since 2007 reported significant effects.
- 78% (n=82) of 105 ELF/static EMF reproduction and development studies published since 1990 reported significant effects.

Studies link EMF to childhood leukemia and cancer.

More than four decades of epidemiological research from around the world have linked long-term exposure to magnetic fields from high-voltage power lines with an increased risk of childhood leukemia and other cancers. The evidence includes landmark studies, pooled analyses, meta-analyses, and recent systematic reviews showing consistent associations across multiple countries and populations.

- [Malagoli et al. \(2023\)](#), a population-based case-control study published in *Environmental Research* found children living within 100 meters of high-voltage power lines had approximately twice the risk of childhood leukemia compared with those living at least 400 meters away. Analyses showed that leukemia risk increased as residential distance to power lines decreased below 100 meters.
- A [systematic review by Brabant et al. \(2022\)](#) in *Reviews on Environmental Health* found that long-term exposure to magnetic fields above 4 milligauss (mG) was associated with increased risk of childhood leukemia, particularly acute lymphoblastic leukemia.
- A [2021 meta-analysis of 33 studies](#) published in *PLOS 1* concluded a significant association between powerline ELF exposure and childhood leukemia, with possible dose-response effects.
- [Correa-Correa et al. 2025](#) published in *Environmental Research* found children exposed to 4 milligauss (ELF-EMF) in their homes had a significantly increased risk of central nervous system tumors. Prolonged tablet use also increased CNST risk, especially in children aged 6–10. Residential ELF-MF exposure was measured over 24 h.
- [Carles et al. 2020](#), a major French population-based study published in *Environmental Research*, found that long-term residence within 50 meters (164 feet) of high-voltage power lines was associated with nearly three times the risk of brain tumors and nearly five times the risk of glioma brain cancer.
- [Sohrabi et al., \(2010\)](#), published in the *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer* found that living within 600 meters of high-voltage power lines was associated with a 2.61-fold increased risk of acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), concluding that proximity to high-voltage power lines is a risk factor for childhood ALL.
- [Feizi and Arabi \(2007\)](#), published in the *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention*, reported an association between childhood acute leukemia and residential exposure to magnetic fields generated by high-voltage overhead power lines in Iran.
- [Kabuto et al. \(2006\)](#), published in the *International Journal of Cancer*, found that Japanese children exposed to residential magnetic fields above 4 mG had an increased risk of childhood leukemia compared with children exposed to lower magnetic field levels.
- [Draper et al. \(2005\)](#), published in the *British Medical Journal* analyzed childhood cancer cases in England and Wales and found that children born within 200 meters of high-voltage power lines had a 69% higher risk of childhood leukemia compared with those living more than 600 meters away.
- [Schüz et al. \(2001\)](#), published in the *International Journal of Cancer*, reported that German children with long-term residential magnetic field exposures of approximately 4 milligauss (0.4 μ T) or greater had an elevated risk of childhood leukemia, supporting findings from earlier Scandinavian studies.

- [Thériault and Li \(1997\)](#), published in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, conducted a meta-analysis of studies of people living near high-voltage transmission lines and found that residential exposure to magnetic fields of 2 mG and above was associated with an increased risk of leukemia, with risk increasing at 3 mG, 4 mG, and 10 mG. The authors concluded that the evidence consistently supports an association.
- [Feychting and Ahlbom \(1993\)](#), published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, was one of the landmark studies reporting an increased risk of childhood leukemia among children living near high-voltage power lines, particularly at estimated magnetic field exposures of ≥ 2 mG, and was influential in the IARC classification.
- [Wertheimer and Leeper \(1979\)](#), published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, was the first epidemiological study to report an association. Children living in homes with wiring indicative of higher current flow had a higher risk of childhood cancer, particularly leukemia, and the association appeared to be dose-related and strongest among children who had lived at the same residence throughout their lives

Studies have found poorer survival in children diagnosed with cancer who are exposed to higher magnetic field levels.

- [Foliart et al. 2006 published](#) in the *British Journal of Cancer* found poorer survival rates in U.S. children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) exposed to magnetic fields above 3 mG compared with those exposed to magnetic fields below 1 mG.
- A German follow-up study by [Svendsen et al. 2007](#) published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* found in children with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) that children exposed to residential magnetic fields above 2 mG after diagnosis had poorer survival than those exposed to lower field levels. After adjusting for prognostic risk factors, children exposed above 2 mG had an approximately threefold higher risk of death.

Industry funding has been found to impact study results.

[A major review of the research](#) on EMF from power lines and cancer published in *Environmental Research* found magnetic field EMF exposure increases risk of adult leukemia, brain and breast cancer. The review also compared industry funded research to independently funded studies and found “almost all government or independent studies find either a statistically significant association between magnetic field exposure and childhood leukemia, or an elevated risk of at least OR = 1.5, while almost all industry supported studies fail to find any significant or even suggestive association.”

“The evidence that magnetic fields increase the risk of cancer is neither inconsistent nor inconclusive. Furthermore, adults are also at risk, not just children, and there is strong evidence for cancers in addition to leukemia, particularly brain and breast cancer.” - David O. Carpenter, M.D., in *Environmental Research* [“Extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields and cancer: How source of funding affects results”](#)

“Controversy, or at least the appearance of controversy, regarding the health risks associated with environmental electromagnetic fields has developed because the emerging scientific picture runs markedly counter to the long-standing interests of some industries and government agencies in unbridled use of the electromagnetic spectrum. The existence of a link between electromagnetic fields in the environment and disease has been established despite the fact that many important details regarding it remain undiscovered.” - [Andrew Marino](#)

Children Are More Vulnerable to EMF Exposure

Children are more vulnerable to environmental exposures, including non-ionizing EMF, because their bodies and brains are still developing and they have more years of life ahead for diseases with long latency periods to develop. Exposure during childhood or pregnancy can have serious impacts later in life. In addition to the consistent association with childhood leukemia, several studies on EMF suggest that early-life exposure may increase the risk of diseases that do not appear until adulthood.

- [Lowenthal et al. \(2007\)](#), published in the *Internal Medicine Journal*, found that adults who lived within 300 meters of a high-voltage power line during childhood had significantly increased risks of lymphoproliferative and myeloproliferative cancers, including certain types of leukemia. Risk was more than threefold higher for those living within 300 meters during the first 15 years of life and nearly fivefold higher for those exposed during the first 5 years.
- [Li, McLaughlin, and Infante-Rivard \(2009\)](#), a Canadian study, published in *Cancer Causes & Control*, on children of mothers who were employed as sewing machine operators (a higher EMF occupation), during their pregnancy had approximately twice the risk of childhood brain tumors.
- [Infante-Rivard and Deadman \(2003\)](#), researchers from McGill University, published in *Epidemiology*, found that children whose mothers had the highest occupational exposure to extremely low-frequency magnetic fields during pregnancy had an increased risk of childhood leukemia, with the highest exposure associated with a 2.5-fold increased risk.
- [Khan et al. \(2022\)](#) published in *Occupational & Environmental Medicine* found that childhood residential exposure to extremely low frequency magnetic fields (ELF-EMF) was associated with a more than twofold increased risk of developing melanoma in adulthood. ([Tynes et al. \(2003\)](#) published in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine* has also reported an association with malignant melanoma.

Studies link EMF to Alzheimer’s disease and other types of dementia.

[Ghiasvand et al. \(2026\)](#) published in the *Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease* reviewed various exposures and states, “Occupational exposures to toxic metals, pesticides, and electromagnetic fields were also associated with higher neurodegeneration risk.”

Here are some studies to know:

- [Sandoval-Diez et al. \(2026\)](#), a 18-year nationwide cohort study of over 3.5 million people published in *Environment International* found increased risk of dementia and Alzheimer's mortality beginning around 0.5 mG, with stronger associations observed in the 1–3 mG range, an EMF range commonly found in homes close to electrical grid infrastructure like power lines and substations.
- [Jalilian et al. \(2018\)](#), published in *Neurotoxicology*, conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of occupational studies and found that workers exposed to extremely low-frequency (ELF) magnetic fields had a significantly increased risk of Alzheimer's disease.
- [Davanipour et al. \(2013\)](#) published in the *Journal of Advances in Medicine and Medical Research*, an National Institutes of Health supported study reported associations between high occupational ELF-EMF exposure and cognitive dysfunction and dementia. Smoking and older age increased the effects.
- [Huss et al. \(2009\)](#), published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, found an increased risk of Alzheimer's mortality associated with long-term residential proximity within 50 meters of high-voltage power lines.

Studies link EMF to reproductive impacts.

Researchers from the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research have published a series of prospective studies examining outcomes associated with magnetic field exposure during pregnancy. In these studies, pregnant women wore personal magnetic field meters to objectively measure their exposure, and researchers then followed the pregnancies and, in many cases, the children for years to evaluate health outcomes.

Their findings include:

- [Li et al. \(2017\)](#), published in Scientific Reports, found higher prenatal EMF associated with a 2.72-fold increased risk of miscarriage, consistent with an earlier study by [Li et al \(2002\)](#) published in *Epidemiology*.
- [Li et al. \(2012\)](#), published in Scientific Reports, found higher prenatal exposure associated with an increased risk of childhood obesity, with a dose-response relationship and up to a 2.3-fold higher risk among children followed through the end of the study.
- [Li et al. \(2011\)](#), published in the *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, found pregnant women with the highest magnetic field exposure defined as a median 24-hour exposure greater than 2.0 mG, had children with more than a 3.5-fold increased risk of asthma, with a clear dose-response relationship.
- [Su et al. \(2014\)](#), published in *PLoS One*, conducted a cross-sectional study of 149 women undergoing elective first-trimester abortions to investigate whether everyday exposure to EMF was associated with embryonic development. Participants wore an magnetic field EMF meter for 24 hours to measure their personal magnetic field

exposure. The study found that higher maternal magnetic field exposure was associated with shorter embryonic bud length.

- [Li et al. \(2010\)](#), published in *Reproductive Toxicology*, studied men's exposure and found that higher daily exposure to magnetic fields (MFs) at 1.6 mG was associated with a two-fold increased risk of poor sperm quality (abnormal motility and morphology).

Studies Link EMF to breast cancer.

The first study on EMF and breast cancer was published by [Matanoski et al. 1991](#) in *The Lancet* reporting on a study that found an increased relative risk of male breast cancer among U.S. telephone company workers (such as linemen and central office installers) who had higher occupational exposure. Since that date, evidence linking magnetic field exposure to breast cancer is strongest for male breast cancer, while some, but not all, studies of female breast cancer have also reported positive associations. Studies also suggest that ELF magnetic field exposure may enhance and/or activate molecular pathways involved in breast cancer and cancer progression.

- [Sun et al. \(2023\)](#), a meta-analysis of 18 studies on EMF exposure and male breast cancer published in the *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention* found EMF significantly associated with increased risk of male breast cancer.
- [Lazzarini et al. \(2023\)](#), published in *Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety* found that exposing human breast cancer cells to a 50 Hz magnetic field increased cell growth, migration, and invasion, while activating genes and molecular pathways associated with breast cancer progression.
- [Grundy et al. \(2016\)](#), published in *Cancer Medicine*, found men exposed to 6 mG or greater had an elevated risk of breast cancer and those exposed for 30 years or more had nearly a threefold increased risk compared with men exposed to less than 3 mG.
- [Di Donato et al. \(2023\)](#), published in *Cells*, exposed human breast cancer cells to a 50 Hz magnetic field for 4 hours and found numerous cellular and protein changes as well as faster growth of cancer cells.
- [Zhao et al. \(2014\)](#), a meta-analysis of sixteen case control studies published in the *European Journal of Gynaecological Oncology* found that ELF magnetic field exposure was associated with a statistically significant increased risk of breast cancer in premenopausal women.
- [Kliukiene et al. \(2004\)](#), published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, found that women living near high-voltage power lines with residential magnetic field exposure had a higher risk of breast cancer compared with unexposed women.
- Fedrowitz and Loscher conducted a series of studies that found that exposing rats to magnetic fields significantly increased cell proliferation in the mammary glands of a

specific strain of rats ([published in *Oncology* in 2005](#)) and long-term exposure increased the incidence of mammary adenocarcinomas ([published in *Carcinogenesis* in 2008](#)).

Studies on occupational exposure have reported adverse effects.

- [Gunnarsson and Bodin \(2019\)](#), a meta-analysis of 19 occupational studies on neurodegenerative disease published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, found that occupational EMF exposure was associated with a higher risk of ALS and Alzheimer's disease.
- [Pedersen et al. \(2017\)](#), published in the International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health, found that Danish utility workers with the highest occupational exposure to magnetic fields had elevated risks of dementia, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, and epilepsy.
- [Huss et al. \(2018\)](#), published in Environmental Research, reported in a meta-analysis that occupational exposure to magnetic fields may affect specific hematolymphopoietic malignancies rather than “all leukaemia” as exposure was associated with an increased risk of acute myeloid leukemia (AML) specifically, particularly among workers with long-term high exposure, in line with previous research studies.
- [Dominici et al. \(2011\)](#), published in the International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health, found that welders occupationally exposed to extremely low-frequency magnetic fields had significantly increased DNA damage, with micronuclei frequency increasing in a dose-response relationship with ELF-MF exposure.
- [Davanipour et al. \(2007\)](#), researchers from the Department of Neurology, Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California, published in *BMC Neurology*, results of their case-control study using patients from the California Alzheimer's Disease Diagnosis and Treatment Centers which found that occupational exposure to extremely low-frequency magnetic fields was associated with increased risk of Alzheimer's disease.
- [Charles et al. \(2003\)](#), published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, found that U.S. electric utility workers with the highest occupational exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMFs) were about twice as likely to die from prostate cancer compared with workers with lower EMF exposure, even after adjusting for PCB exposure and other potential confounding factors.
- [Minder et al. \(2001\)](#), published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, found that Swiss railway workers with the highest occupational exposure to extremely low frequency (ELF) magnetic fields had a 2.4-fold increased leukemia mortality, with leukemia risk increasing significantly as cumulative magnetic field exposure and years exposed to fields $\geq 10 \mu\text{T}$ increased, supporting an association between heavy ELF magnetic field exposure and leukemia.
- [Jalilian et al. \(2018\)](#), published in *Neurotoxicology*, conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of occupational studies and found that workers exposed to extremely low-frequency (ELF) magnetic fields had a significantly increased risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Studies report non-ionizing EMF can have a range of biological effects.

A substantial body of research shows that electromagnetic fields (EMFs) can affect multiple biological systems through mechanisms including oxidative stress, DNA damage, endocrine disruption, altered cell signaling, and changes in nervous system function.

“Evidence supporting EMF-induced oxidative stress is substantial. Numerous studies report that exposure to EMFs results in oxidative stress across various tissues, increasing free radical concentrations and influencing radical pair recombination processes...Recent human observational studies and meta-analyses have also suggested increased oxidative stress as a clinical pattern of toxic health effects associated with EMF exposure [32]. Oxidative stress thus serves as a central, downstream pathway. Multiple lines of evidence converge on oxidative stress as a key mechanism, with detailed explanations illustrating how EMFs, through non-thermal means like ion channel modulation, can lead to ROS overproduction, which subsequently causes cellular damage.”

- [A Narrative Review on the Influence of Electromagnetic Fields Below 100 kHz on the Endocrine System](#)

- [Tojza et al. \(2026\)](#) published in *Applied Sciences* reviewed the studies on EMF and the endocrine system concluding that animal studies consistently show EMF from power infrastructure can alter melatonin secretion, stress hormones, thyroid function, and reproductive hormones. While human studies remain limited, the authors state the widespread chronic exposure justifies precautionary consideration and more rigorous long-term research.
- [Danho \(2025\)](#) published in *Cureus* found “EMFs negatively affect a wide array of biological systems of living organisms, including mechanisms of oxidative stress, inflammatory responses, and disruptions in cellular, physiological, and ecological processes.
- [Lai and Levitt \(2023\)](#), published in *Reviews on Environmental Health*, concluded that non-ionizing electromagnetic fields can trigger a cellular stress response involving oxidative stress, DNA, protein, and lipid damage, activating repair pathways and other biological responses that may influence cancer risk, neurodegenerative diseases, nerve regeneration depending on exposure conditions.
- [Giorgi and Del Re \(2021\)](#), a review on epigenetic changes and EMF, published in *Cell and Tissue Research* found “available evidence indicates that ELF-MF exposure can be associated with epigenetic changes, including DNA methylation, modifications of histones and microRNA expression. They noted that epigenetic alterations are implicated in diseases including cancer and neurological disorders and called for further research.
- [Lai \(2021\)](#), published in *Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine*, reviewed the studies on genetic effects of non-ionizing EMF reporting that many studies reported effects in cells and animals after exposure to EMF at intensities similar to those in the public and occupational environments. While the energy level is not sufficient to cause direct breakage of chemical bonds within molecules, the effects are probably indirect and secondary to other induced chemical changes in the cell via multiple inter-dependent biological mechanisms.

Scientists have long stated that EMF exposure creates a “cellular stress response.

Electromagnetic fields (EMFs) can act as a biological stressor. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, pioneering researchers including Robert O. Becker and Andrew A. Marino demonstrated that extremely weak electric and magnetic fields, at levels well below those which caused nerve stimulation and electrical shock, could alter normal biological function. Becker coined the term "electrical pollution" to describe the rapidly increasing presence of artificial manmade electromagnetic fields in the environment which he warned was a novel environmental stressor.

Marino has [long argued](#) that his research clearly shows that chronic EMF exposure is a biological stressor. The EMF exposure places physiological demands on the organism that, when sustained or sufficiently intense, may contribute to a wide range of adverse health effects depending on the individual's susceptibility. Rather than producing one specific disease, chronic activation of the stress response can disrupt normal cellular regulation and increase vulnerability to numerous biological abnormalities and disease processes.

“Electromagnetic energy does not act only on a single target organ. There is a clear pattern in the literature indicating that electromagnetic energy is a biological stressor—that it places a nonspecific physiological demand on the exposed organism. When the organism’s capacity to resist has been exceeded, a clinical sign—an effect—is manifested whose nature depends in part on the predisposition of the exposed subject. It follows, therefore that the exposure of a substantial part of the population in an uncontrolled, random, and essentially involuntary manner amounts to a significant public-health (and ethical) problem.”

Marino synthesized findings from multiple experimental and epidemiological studies into a single illustration [in his 1984 paper](#) in a graphic entitled "Power Frequency Fields of a 765 kV Line in Relation to Observed Biological Effects."

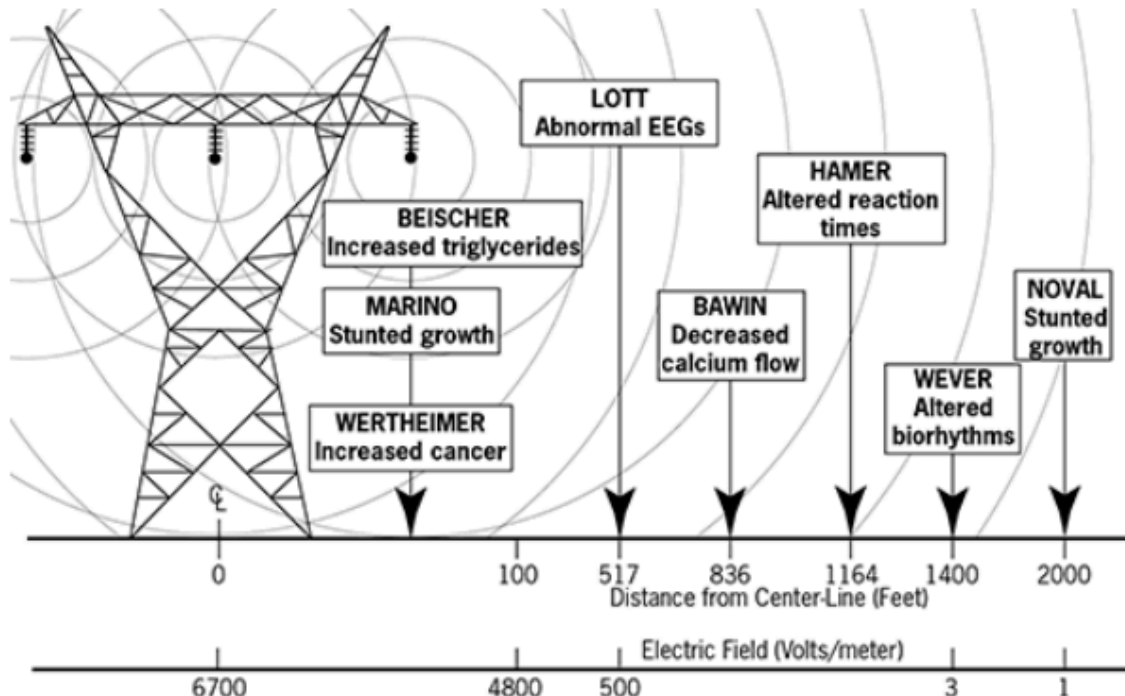


FIGURE 2: Power Frequency Fields of a 765 kV Line in Relation to Observed Biological Effects

Marino noted that several studies reporting increased childhood cancer, altered growth, and elevated triglycerides involved field strengths found within approximately the first 100 feet of a 765 kV high-voltage transmission line, while five additional studies reported biological effects—including abnormal EEGs, altered calcium flow, changes in reaction time, disrupted circadian rhythms, and stunted growth—at field intensities equivalent to those occurring hundreds to thousands of feet from a 765-kV line. He concluded that these examples represented only a portion of the available literature, noting that "there are many other similar reports of biological effects."

Marino conducted numerous [animal studies](#) and [biophysical calculations](#) that showed electromagnetic energy penetrates the body and can cause physiological effects. As an example, in 1980 Marino, Becker, and Ullrich conducted one of the first [multigenerational studies of power-frequency electric fields](#), continuously exposing mice to 60 Hz electric fields of field strengths that Marino later noted are comparable to those found within approximately the first 100 feet of a typical 765-kV transmission line. The [study](#), published in *Experientia*, found

that across three successive generations, exposed mice exhibited reduced body weight and increased mortality, particularly in the vertically exposed group.

In 1990 Marino's [peer-reviewed meta-analysis](#) published in the Journal of Bioelectricity, reviewed eight multigenerational mouse experiments conducted over a 15-year period involving continuous exposure to 60-Hz electric fields. Across these studies, he found that the exposure consistently altered development and developmental variability, with statistically significant effects observed in all eight experiments. Although these effects did not follow a simple linear dose-response relationship, Marino concludes that the exposure elicited different physiological responses depending on the organism's internal regulatory systems.

Read a list of [Andrew Marino's published papers here](#)

- [Tokalov and Gutzeit \(2004\)](#), published in *Environmental Research*, found that exposing human myeloid leukemia cells to 50 Hz magnetic fields significantly increased expression of HSP70 stress-response genes, demonstrating that extremely low-frequency electromagnetic fields can activate the cellular stress response. The authors concluded that ELF-EMFs may alter cellular homeostasis and that their biological effects follow an unusual non-linear dose-response pattern.
- [Blank and Goodman \(2009\)](#), scientists who together with colleagues have published numerous studies on the issue, published a foundational paper in Pathophysiology entitled “Electromagnetic fields stress living cells” concluding that both extremely low-frequency (ELF) and radiofrequency (RF) electromagnetic fields activate cellular stress responses, including the expression of HSP70 stress proteins, and argued that EMF safety standards should be based on biological effects.

Studies link EMF to neurological impacts.

- [Bertagna et al. \(2021\)](#), published in *Annals of New York Academy of Sciences* conducted a systematic review of studies published between 2005 and 2020 on neuronal ion channels and found that extremely low-frequency (ELF) electromagnetic fields can alter voltage-gated ion channels at multiple levels, including their gating dynamics, ion conductance, membrane insertion, and gene and protein expression. The authors state that, “this systematic review reports significant correlation between EMFs and multiple changes in the electrophysiological properties of diverse neuronal tissues,” concluding that voltage-gated calcium channels (VGCCs) are an important transducer of ELF-EMF effects in neurons, where they play a central role in neurotransmitter release, synaptic plasticity, neuronal communication, neurite outgrowth, and gene expression.
- [Lai \(2022\)](#), published in *Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine*, reviewed studies showing that static and extremely low-frequency (ELF) electromagnetic fields can affect

neurotransmitters, memory, learning, behavior, and neurological diseases, with evidence suggesting that oxidative stress and free radicals may play an important role in these effects. Depending on the conditions of exposure, either harmful or beneficial effects could result. Further research is needed, especially to extrapolate the animal studies to humans.

- [Ghadamgahi et al. \(2016\)](#) published in *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment* evaluated the working memory in 10- to 12-year-old boys attending elementary schools located near a high-voltage electrical substation and found students attending the schools with higher magnetic field levels performed significantly worse on a standardized working memory assessment adapted from the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV). “It is concluded that extremely low frequency magnetic field exposure may have a negative impact on the working memory of children, but further studies are necessary to reach a definitive conclusion.”

EMF can act systemically with other toxic exposures.

Numerous studies have reported synergistic effects when EMF is combined with other toxic exposures.

- [Soffritti et al. \(2016\)](#), published in the *International Journal of Radiation Biology*, found that lifelong exposure to a 50 Hz magnetic field combined with low-dose gamma radiation significantly increased the incidence of mammary tumors, lymphomas/leukemias, and malignant heart schwannomas in rats. The authors conclude that, “These results call for a re-evaluation of the safety of non-ionizing radiation.”
- [Rajkovic et al. \(2010\)](#) published in *Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology* reported that peripubertal male rats exposed to both the endocrine-disrupting herbicide atrazine and power-frequency EMF showed significant degranulation of cutaneous mast cells, with combined exposures producing stronger effects.
- [Chen et al. \(2021\)](#) published in *Ecotoxicology and Environmental Safety* reported that combined exposure to Di (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) and 50 Hz magnetic fields (MF) enhanced proliferation of human amniotic cells. The authors state, “Given that both MF and DEHP are ubiquitous environmental contaminants, the adverse effect of co-exposure at “safe levels” should not be underestimated.”
- [Ansarihadipour & Bayatiani \(2016\)](#) in *Iranian Red Crescent Medical Journal* reported that lead in the presence of EMF exacerbated the oxidative damage to plasma proteins in human blood samples. “This result demonstrates that EMF and lead have synergistic effects that produce reactive oxygen species and promote chemical and conformational modifications in erythrocyte and plasma proteins.”
- [Moretti et al. \(2005\)](#) published in *Toxicology Letters*, found that exposure to a 50 Hz magnetic field increased the DNA-damaging effects of two toxic benzene metabolites, hydroquinone and 1,2,4-benzenetriol, in human cells, suggesting ELF magnetic fields may enhance the effects of certain chemical carcinogens. “The possibility that 50 Hz (power frequency) MF might interfere with the genotoxic activity of xenobiotics has

important implications, since human populations are likely to be exposed to a variety of genotoxic agents concomitantly with exposure to this type of physical agent.”

- [Ramazi et al. \(2023\)](#) study published in *Scientific Reports* found that a 50 Hz ELF magnetic field acted synergistically with the chemotherapy drug doxorubicin, significantly increasing breast cancer cell death compared with the drug alone. The findings demonstrate that the synergistic effect of ELF magnetic fields may have beneficial therapeutic applications.

EMF has been found to impact animals and their habitat.

Studies on EMF, flora and fauna

Current scientific evidence exists that indicates the non-ionizing electromagnetic fields (EMFs) emitted by power lines and substations could impact the health of animals, including cattle, birds and bees.

A landmark three-part research review of non-ionizing EMF impacts on flora and fauna published in *Reviews on Environmental Health* citing more than 1,200 scientific references ([Levitt et al. 2021a](#), [Levitt et al. 2021b](#), [Levitt et al. 2021c](#)) found a broad range of impacts in all species studied including altered behavior, reproduction, endocrine disruption “at vanishingly low levels.”

“Numerous studies across all frequencies and taxa indicate that current low-level anthropogenic EMF can have myriad adverse and synergistic effects, including on orientation and migration, food finding, reproduction, mating, nest and den building, territorial maintenance and defense, and on vitality, longevity and survivorship itself. Effects have been observed in mammals such as bats, cervids, cetaceans, and pinnipeds among others, and on birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles, microbes and many species of flora.”

-Blake Levitt, Henry Lai and Albert Manville in

[“Effects of non-ionizing electromagnetic fields on flora and fauna, Part 2 impacts: How species interact with natural and man-made EMF”](#) *Reviews on Environmental Health*

EMF has been linked to cancers in animals

[Brabant, Christian et al. \(2024\)](#), a systematic review and meta-analysis on animal studies that studied ELF-MF and cancer incidence, published in *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology* concluded that while ELF-MF do not affect the odds of lymphoma, brain cancer and breast cancer in rodents, it did increase the odds of developing leukemia in mice. Their “systematic review also suggests that ELF-MF can damage DNA in certain cell types like brain cells.” The authors conclude that the carcinogenic effects could be limited to leukemia.

Notably [Reif et al. \(1995\)](#), published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, found that pet dogs living in homes with high or very high wire codes, a surrogate measure of magnetic field

exposure from nearby power lines, had an increased risk of lymphoma, with dogs in the very highest wire code category having nearly a sevenfold increased risk compared with dogs living near buried or low-current power lines.) Minimal research has investigated the impact of power line EMF to dogs and pets.

Studies on high-voltage power lines, EMFs, and bees

Research over several decades has reported that the electromagnetic fields (EMFs) generated by high-voltage transmission lines can negatively affect pollinators, particularly honeybees, by interfering with navigation, foraging, learning, stress physiology, and pollination efficiency. As an example of the early research, [Wellenstein 1973](#) documented how honey bee colonies beneath 110-kV and 220-kV transmission lines became significantly more irritable, with increased swarming behavior and altered colony performance compared with control colonies located 60–800 meters away. [Greenberg et al \(1981\)](#) found honeybee colonies exposed under a 765-kV, 60-Hz transmission line at 7 kV/m “show the following sequence of effects: 1) increased motor activity with transient increase in hive temperature; 2) abnormal propolization; 3) impaired hive weight gain; 4) queen loss and abnormal production of queen cells; 5) decreased sealed brood; and 6) poor winter survival.”

Because honeybees rely on highly sensitive electrical, magnetic, and sensory cues to locate flowers and communicate within colonies, researchers have raised concerns that chronic exposure to power line-associated EMFs and electric fields could contribute to pollinator decline.

- [Thill et al. \(2023\)](#), a major systematic review and meta-analysis research review on the research since 1980 on non-ionizing EMF and insects, published in *Reviews on Environmental Health* found “the vast majority of studies found effects, generally harmful ones.” Studies document altered behavior and enzyme activity/metabolism, increased oxidative stress, DNA damage, and impaired reproductive capacity, memory and development.
- [Molina-Montenegro et al. \(2023\)](#), published in *Science Advances* found that the EMF exposure from high-voltage transmission towers increased stress-related gene expression, reduced honeybee flower visitation, impaired pollination efficiency, and even decreased seed production and plant community richness near the transmission lines.

“We propose that honeybees’ exposure to EMF disturbs their foraging capabilities by altering their magnetic navigation, learning, decision-making mechanisms, flight, and foraging, thus impairing pollination activity...Our study provides strong evidence of detrimental effects of EMF on honeybee’s visitation and plant reproduction and may contribute to explaining, at least in part, the global pollination crisis that risks the adequate production of many crops.”

—[“Electromagnetic fields disrupt the pollination service by honeybees”](#)

- [Levitt et al. 2021b](#) details how bees may be reacting negatively to EMF “through multi-sensory mechanisms to numerous sources of anthropogenic multi-frequency [EMF] interference.” The review also details research dating back to the 1970s showing that transmission line electric fields affected honey bees in wooden hives, prompting investigations by the U.S. Bonneville Power Administration and [industry researchers](#). Those subsequent studies found that electric fields from powerlines could induce currents inside hives and lead to numerous effects, including decreased colony weight gains, increased irritability and mortality, abnormal production of queen cells, queen loss, decreased seal brood, and poor over-winter colony survival.
- A review by wildlife biologist Alfonso Balmori published in *Science of the Total Environment* entitled [“Electromagnetic radiation as an emerging driver factor for the decline of insects”](#) found “sufficient evidence” that electromagnetic radiation impacts insects and concludes that “electromagnetic radiation should be considered seriously as a complementary driver for the dramatic decline in insects, acting in synergy with agricultural intensification, pesticides, invasive species and climate change.”
- [Mallinson et al. \(2025\)](#) published in *iScience* by found that anthropogenic electric fields comparable to those measured near high-voltage transmission lines significantly reduced honeybee floral landings. Alternating current (AC) electric fields reduced bee landings by 71%, while positive direct current (DC) fields reduced landings by 53%. They concluded that electric pollution from power infrastructure has the potential to disrupt plant–pollinator interactions and highlighted the need for further research on its ecological impacts.
- A series of studies by researchers at Wroclaw University Poland exposed bees to various EMF intensities reporting a range of impacts. [Migdal et al \(2020\)](#) published in *Insects* found the electric field exposure impacted the antioxidant system of the honeybee. [Migdal P et al. \(2021\)](#) published in *Animals* found behavioral disturbances may reduce the efficiency of bees as pollinators, which will translate into a decrease in the efficiency of crop production. [Migdal et al \(2021\)](#) published in *PLOS ONE* found the impairment of crucial metabolic cycles and alterations to the concentration of important non-enzymatic antioxidants which may indicate a disturbance in protein metabolism and increased muscle activity.
- [Shepherd et al. \(2019\)](#), published in *PLOS ONE*, found that short-term in honeybees exposure to powerline EMFs, at levels that could be encountered in bee hives placed under or near power lines, impacted learning and increased aggression levels.
- [Shepherd et al. \(2018\)](#), published in *Scientific Reports* found exposure to ELF EMFs near powerline conductors, affected honey bee olfactory learning, flight, foraging activity and feeding.

“The results suggest that 50 Hz ELF EMFs emitted from powerlines may represent a prominent environmental stressor for honey bees, with the potential to impact on their cognitive and motor abilities, which could in turn reduce their ability to pollinate crops.”- [Extremely Low Frequency Electromagnetic Fields impair the Cognitive and Motor Abilities of Honey Bees | Scientific Reports](#)

Studies indicate EMFs may increase the harmful effects of pesticides and other environmental stressors on bees

Evidence suggests that EMFs may act as a co-stressor, amplifying the harmful effects of pesticides and other environmental stressors on honeybee health.

- [Lupi et al. \(2021\)](#) published in *Insects* monitored honeybee colonies in several experimental conditions for one year and found that combined multi-stress exposure of pesticides plus electromagnetic fields from a high-voltage transmission line caused the most severe biochemical, physiological, and behavioral alterations.
- [Piechowicz et al. \(2020\)](#), published in *Environmental Research*, found that exposure to EMFs changed how honey bees broke down and detoxified two pesticides and caused changes to proteins, DNA, RNA, and other important molecules in their bodies.

“In this study, the cumulative effect of chemical and electromagnetic field exposure (multi-stress conditions) showed the worst general health condition, considering colony survival, pathology emergence and behavioural anomalies such as abnormal honey storage and excess of drone brood deposition. For the number of queen changes and the queen mortality in the underbasket, double the rate occurred than in the control and even in the chemical-stress site.”

[-Combined Effects of Pesticides and Electromagnetic-Fields on Honeybees: Multi-Stress Exposure](#)

Studies find magnetic fields can affect fish development and reproduction.

There has been little research directly examining fish living in streams or ponds beneath overhead transmission lines. However, a growing body of research has investigated whether the electromagnetic fields (EMFs) generated by underwater transmission cables affect fish and other aquatic organisms, demonstrating that some species can detect and respond to these fields.

- [Formicki et al. \(2021\)](#), published in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, reviewed dozens of studies on the effects of magnetic fields on the early developmental stages of fish and concluded that magnetic fields can affect embryonic development, survival, embryo size, motor function, pigmentation, respiration, hatching success, orientation, sperm motility, egg activation, heart rate, and inner ear development.
- [Guo et al. \(2023\)](#), published in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, found that developing zebrafish exposed to 50 Hz magnetic fields significantly reduced spontaneous movement, caused structural abnormalities in the brain, increased

oxidative stress (reactive oxygen species, ROS), and altered expression of a gene essential for nerve cell communication.

EMF can Impact the Endocrine System: Implications for Agriculture, Especially Dairy Cows

Prolonged exposure to non-ionizing electromagnetic fields (EMFs) has been associated with changes in hormone regulation in both humans and animals. These effects are particularly important for livestock, where disruptions to hormone function may affect fertility, milk production, and overall herd health.

- [Tojza et al. \(2026\)](#), a review on endocrine impacts, published in *Applied Sciences*, concluded that animal studies consistently show EMF exposure can disrupt the endocrine system by altering stress hormones, suppressing melatonin release, affecting thyroid hormone activity, and impairing reproductive function, changes that may influence growth, metabolism and fertility.
- [Kolbabová et al. \(2015\)](#) published in *Scientific Reports* found that exposure to EMF magnetic fields altered melatonin production in young cattle calves in a season-dependent manner, with significantly reduced melatonin levels during the winter as compared to the summer where melatonin levels were increased.
- [Stelletta et al. \(2007\)](#), published in *Biomedical and Environmental Sciences*, found that dairy cows exposed to levels of EMF expected from 380 kV transmission lines had altered circadian rhythms and changes in immune system markers, indicating that power line EMF exposure can affect immune function and biological rhythms.
- [Rodriguez et al. \(2003\)](#), published in *Animal Reproduction Science*, found that exposure to 60 Hz electric and magnetic fields significantly altered the estrous cycle and prolonged the luteal phase in dairy cows, demonstrating that EMFs can affect the endocrine system and reproductive function.
- [Burchard et al. \(1998\)](#), published in *Bioelectromagnetics*, found that dairy cows exposed to 60 Hz electric and magnetic fields had significantly longer estrous cycles than during unexposed periods, indicating that EMF exposure altered normal reproductive cycling.

Studies have linked power line EMFs to behavioral effects in mammals.

- [Iakovenko et al. \(2025\)](#), published in *Animals*, found that high-voltage power lines significantly altered the magnetic orientation behavior of domestic dogs, suggesting that the alternating magnetic fields generated by power lines may interfere with dogs' magnetoreception and influence their natural orientation behavior. These findings build on earlier research by [Hart et al. \(2013\)](#), published in *Frontiers in Zoology*, which

demonstrated that domestic dogs are sensitive to subtle variations in the Earth's magnetic field.

- [Begall et al. \(2008\)](#), published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*, found that cattle and deer preferentially aligned their bodies along the Earth's north-south magnetic axis while grazing or resting, providing evidence that large mammals can detect and respond to the Earth's magnetic field. Cattle naturally graze and rest facing a magnetic north-south direction. A subsequent study by [Burda et al. \(2009\)](#) published in the same journal found that the extremely low-frequency magnetic fields directly beneath high-voltage lines completely disrupt this internal compass, causing cows and deer to orient themselves in random directions.

“Body orientation of cattle and roe deer was random on pastures under or near power lines. Moreover, cattle exposed to various magnetic fields directly beneath or in the vicinity of power lines trending in various magnetic directions exhibited distinct patterns of alignment. The disturbing effect of the ELFMs on body alignment diminished with the distance from conductors. These findings constitute evidence for magnetic sensation in large mammals as well as evidence of an overt behavioral reaction to weak ELFMs in vertebrates. The demonstrated reaction to weak ELFMs implies effects at the cellular and molecular levels.”

- [Extremely low-frequency electromagnetic fields disrupt magnetic alignment of ruminants](#)

Biological Effects of EMFs on Trees and Plants

A growing body of laboratory and field research indicates that EMF, even at levels below the limits of IEEE and ICNIRP, can have variable effects on plant growth, physiology, reproduction, and cellular processes.

Because of these biological effects, controlled EMF exposures are being investigated as potential agricultural tools to improve seed germination, plant growth, and crop productivity. However, these EMF applications involve carefully controlled field strengths, frequencies, and timing that are optimized for specific plant species. This research should not be interpreted to mean that the continuous, uncontrolled EMF produced by high-voltage transmission lines will have beneficial effects. Rather, this research confirms that the EMF generated by electrical grid infrastructure can affect plants and trees at levels created by electrical grid infrastructure.

- [Levitt et al. \(2021, 2021, 2021\)](#) evaluated numerous studies on wildlife and plants, concluding that numerous plant species exhibit biological responses to both ELF and radiofrequency EMF at environmentally relevant exposure levels. The authors recommend recognizing anthropogenic EMFs as an environmental pollutant and developing environmental exposure standards to protect ecosystems.



- [Kouzmanova et al. \(2026\)](#) published in *Applied Sciences* reviewed the mechanisms by which electromagnetic fields influence plants and their potential applications in smart agriculture. They concluded that plants respond to EMF through well-established biological pathways, including changes in calcium signaling, reactive oxygen species (ROS), ion transport, enzyme activity, gene expression, and photosynthesis.
- [Da Silva and Dobránszki \(2016\)](#) published in *Protoplasma* found magnetic fields can modify seed germination and affect seedling growth and development in a wide range of plants, including field, fodder and industrial crops and cereals.
- [Maffei \(2014\)](#) reviewed evidence that plants perceive magnetic fields as environmental signals, with effects on calcium signaling, reactive oxygen species, gene expression, germination and stress responses.

Stray voltage, electrical disturbances, induction, and interference

Studies find stray voltage and electrical disturbances can affect dairy cattle

Stray voltage, induction and other electrical disturbances associated with electrical power systems have long been recognized as agricultural concerns because they can affect livestock behavior, health, and milk production. Stray voltage occurs when electrical current travels onto objects like irrigation systems, fencing, pipelines, and other metal infrastructure creating unwanted electrical shocks. If a long metal fence or an ungrounded metal building roof runs parallel right beneath a high-voltage line, the air can "induce" a small electrostatic charge onto that metal.

On-site farm equipment can also create stray voltage, and once identified, it can be corrected. High-voltage transmission lines and substations have the potential to contribute to electrical disturbances through induced voltages, neutral-to-earth voltage, ground currents, and harmonic currents. This is beyond the control of the property owner.

- [Hillman et al. \(2013\)](#), published in *Science of the Total Environment*, analyzed electrical measurements and milk production data from 1,705 dairy cows on 12 farms in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota. The researchers found that electrical transients, harmonic distortion, and earth currents were associated with reduced milk production and altered animal behavior. They concluded that existing utility standards for actionable voltage were not sufficiently protective and recommended substantially lower limits urging the IEEE to address the effects of harmonic currents on human and animal health.

To date, IEEE standards have not incorporated these recommendations. Several states, including Wisconsin, Michigan, Idaho, and Minnesota, have adopted standardized stray-voltage investigation protocols for livestock. These are utility action thresholds, not

health-based exposure limits, and they are not IEEE standards. In addition, Bloomberg has reported that data centers [can contribute to harmonic distortion](#) on the electric grid.

This is an area that warrants additional research, funded independently from the industry, particularly as new 765 kV transmission lines are proposed. Utilities often state that it is safe for livestock to graze and for agricultural equipment to operate beneath these lines within the right-of-way. However, the intense electric fields generated by extra-high-voltage transmission lines can induce voltages and static charges on large ungrounded conductive objects, such as vehicles, irrigation systems, farm equipment, and long metal fences. When a metal fence runs parallel to a transmission line, induced voltages can develop along its length, creating the potential for nuisance shocks or, under certain conditions, contact voltages.

(Note: This is why some farmers are [experimenting](#) with harvesting power coming off the power lines by setting up metal lines nearby to capture the EMF and use it to power LED lights or charge low voltage batteries. See also [Air Force research lab engineers harvesting the energy](#). If the electromagnetic energy in the air can power things, then what of the effect on living things? What of the effect of the chronic exposure of “low levels.”)

In addition, if a nearby lightning strike energizes the electrical system, dangerous voltages can be transferred to a fence. This is why proper grounding, routine inspection, and electrical safety within and near transmission line rights-of-way is critical. Most utilities have investigation protocols for contact voltage and stray voltage. These often specify when testing is required, how to measure contact voltage, and what mitigation is needed if elevated voltages are found. However, there is no single nationwide U.S. utility contact-voltage limit that all electric utilities must follow. Requirements for oversight vary by utility and state.

Utility companies generally inspect high-voltage lines and their right-of-way corridors 1 to 2 times per year, typically using helicopters, drones, or ground crews but they do not necessarily have a standard schedule to check every individual farm fence.

“Even when the stray voltage current is at a low level, specifically anything above 0.5 volt, it can still be harmful to livestock. These currents put stress on the animals, which in turn lowers their immune systems, leading to a variety of issues. Dairy cows have shown to be more sensitive to stray voltage than any other livestock. Voltage has been shown to cause decreased milk production, due to a lowered water intake and in turn a lowered feed intake. Farmers have also noted a range of issues relating to breeding and calving. Dairy farmers have even reported extremely sick cows, some of which have later died.”

[-Stray Voltage and Dairy Farms Can Lead to Large Damage Awards | Iowa State University, Center for Agricultural Law and Taxation](#)

Transmission Lines Could Cause AC Interference with Buried Gas Pipelines

When high-voltage transmission lines run parallel to or cross buried steel pipelines, electromagnetic induction has the potential to produce AC voltages and currents on the pipeline. This can accelerate localized corrosion, interfere with cathodic protection systems, and create electrical safety hazards. If not properly evaluated and mitigated, AC-induced corrosion can compromise pipeline integrity, increasing the risk of leaks or, in rare cases, pipeline rupture if not properly evaluated and mitigated. Documented cases of AC-corrosion-related pipeline failures have been reported internationally, including in Canada, Germany, Australia, and the United States,

Because the risk depends on project-specific conditions, utilities conduct engineering studies to evaluate AC interference and determine whether mitigation measures are required.

A pipeline can experience significant induced voltages when it runs parallel to a high-voltage transmission line for long distances, even if the pipeline is tens or hundreds of feet away. Companies conduct project-specific electromagnetic interference studies rather than relying on a simple setback distance.

Concerns about this issue have already been raised for proposed 765 kV transmission projects in Texas that would cross major natural gas pipelines. Landowners have requested project-specific AC interference studies, disclosure of the anticipated mitigation measures, and evaluation of the associated costs *before the proposal moves forward*.

Resources

- [Understanding and Mitigating the Threat of AC Induced Corrosion on Buried Pipelines](#)
- [Mitigation of inductive coupling effects on buried pipelines using gradient control conductors of overhead line configuration and hippopotamus optimization algorithm](#)
- [Modeling, analysis, and shielding of the electric field between extra-high-voltage AC transmission lines and oil pipelines](#)

Transmission lines can impact biodiversity through their construction and operation

The systematic review “[Power lines and impacts on biodiversity: A systematic review](#)” by Biasotto & Kindel (2018) examined 206 scientific articles and 19 Environmental Impact studies finding 28 distinct biotic impacts, effects on plants, animals, populations, and ecological communities linked to transmission line construction and operation. They found that most impacts which originate during the construction phase (e.g., vegetation clearing, habitat alteration, soil disturbance), continue into the operational phase of the transmission line. Some of the most commonly reported impacts include:

- Changes in species abundance, distribution, and behavior.
- Bird mortality from collisions with wires.
- Bird and mammal mortality from electrocution.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation caused by right-of-way clearing:
- Increased access for invasive species.
- Altered predator–prey relationships.
- Changes in community composition and ecosystem functioning.

Clearing wide pathways for power lines removes trees and disrupts plant and animal habitats. This changes local microclimates and can increase the spread of invasive plant species in the newly cleared space.

Massive power lines can present risks to water systems.

The construction and physical installation of high-voltage transmission lines can also present risks to local water systems. Some examples:

- **Flood risk:** Establishing these massive power corridors requires clearing wide easements, stripping away trees and shrubs that naturally stabilize the landscape. Without this deep-root cover, exposed soil excavation areas are highly vulnerable to heavy rainfall, resulting in accelerated erosion and sediment-laden runoff. Furthermore, erecting massive steel towers alters natural drainage patterns. This all can spike flood risks.
- **Herbicide and Chemical Runoff:** Utilities generally use pesticides and herbicides, including Roundup (glyphosate) to prevent vegetation from growing into the live high-voltage cables. They also use other chemicals, all of which can leach into the soil or wash into streams during heavy rains, causing surface and groundwater contamination.

High-Voltage Power Lines And Birds: EMFs, Collisions, And Electrocution

Due to collisions and electrocutions, power lines can kill [hundreds of millions of birds](#) each year. Further bird impacts are also due to the change in habitat caused by the removal of vegetation for the lines as rights-of-way, can be up to 100 m wide and cross natural habitats across long stretches of land fragmenting landscapes for all wildlife, including birds and mammals.

[Pálsdóttir et al. \(2022\)](#) published in the *International Journal of Avian Science* surveyed breeding birds along overhead power lines in Iceland and found that the combined breeding density of eight common ground-nesting bird species was lowest near power lines and increased with distance. The authors address numerous issues that could impact birds in their paper, such as how the lines are predator perches, and create visual disturbances, and noise but also that power lines generate an electromagnetic field, “which has been shown to affect

avian behaviour, physiology and development” and they conclude that "power lines can influence the breeding density of ground-nesting bird species in their vicinity and that accounting for such effects when planning future infrastructure will be imperative."

Research has found that the electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) generated by high-voltage transmission lines can affect bird physiology, behavior, reproduction, and development. Examples include:

- Fernie and Reynolds (2005), published in the *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health*, reviewing numerous field and laboratory studies on the effects of power line EMF on birds concluded that most studies reported EMF exposure altered bird behavior, reproductive success, growth and development, physiology, endocrinology, and oxidative stress.
- Mohamed et al. (2015), published in the *Pakistan Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences*, exposed fertilized chicken eggs to magnetic fields at levels below IEEE limits before incubation. The researchers found that the exposure altered hemoglobin conductivity and reduced red blood cell membrane mobility in newly hatched chicks, indicating measurable changes in blood biophysics.
- Roda et al. (2011), published in *Histology and Histopathology*, exposed fertilized chick embryos throughout incubation to pulsed magnetic fields at levels below IEEE limits and found delayed early embryonic development, reduced growth at hatching, with significantly lower body weight, altered brain biology and reduced glycosaminoglycan expression in brain tissue, suggesting disruption of molecules important for normal brain development and organ formation. The authors concluded, "These results suggest that pulsed magnetic fields may be able to hinder normal embryonic development in vivo and to alter normal neural function."
- Fernie and Bird (2001) published in *Environmental Research* found that EMF exposure suppressed melatonin, altered immune function, reduced blood proteins, hematocrit, and carotenoid levels, and increased evidence of oxidative stress.
- Fernie et al. (1999) published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* found that EMF exposure to American Kestrels altered plasma melatonin levels in adult males, suppressed melatonin in fledglings following long-term parental exposure, advanced molting in males, and could affect migration, metabolism, and development.
- Fernie et al. (2000) published in *Physiological and Biochemical Zoology* found EMF exposure affected reproductive success of kestrels, increasing fertility, egg size, embryonic development, and fledging success but reducing hatching success.

Protecting Birds Through Better Transmission Line Design and Siting

Many Countries Require Bird-Safe Power Line Designs—The U.S. Does Not

According to the UN Environment Programme power lines constitute one of the major causes of unnatural death for birds and “the most effective measure to avoid both electrocution and collision is underground cabling, which has already been done in countries such as the Netherlands and in certain parts of Belgium, the United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark and Germany.”

The UN recommended measures include

- The most effective measure to eliminate the possibility of both electrocution and collision is underground cabling. This has already been done in the Netherlands and in certain critical locations in Belgium, the United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark and Germany. This method is very costly and therefore not feasible for the whole AfricanEurasian region.
- Another obvious way in which to prevent bird electrocutions and collisions is minimizing the construction of new power lines, through efficient network planning and dispersed power generators.
- Routing new power lines away from areas that are home to, or attract, bird species that are known to be susceptible to electrocution and collision, also taking into account landscape and vegetation features.
- Designing the location, route and direction of power lines on the basis of national zoning maps, avoiding, where possible, the construction in habitats of conservation importance, such as important bird areas, protected areas, Ramsar sites and other critical sites as identified by the Critical Site Network (CSN) Tool:
<http://csntool.wingsoverwetlands.org/csn/default.html>
- The guidelines include many other technical measures for both electrocution and collision. These include insulation measures, line design or configuration, perch management techniques and a range of power line marking devices including spheres, swinging plates, bird flappers and others which make lines more visible to birds.
- The review also includes a summary assessment of the efficiency of such marking devices, sighting ongoing research in different countries, with some concluding that wire marking reduced bird mortality by 50-80%.

Text from “[UN Wildlife Meeting Pushes to Make Power Lines Safer for Birds](#).”

As an example, Germany has incorporated bird protection into its [Federal Nature Conservation Act](#) by requiring utilities to protect birds from electrocution on overhead power lines. The law requires newly constructed medium-voltage power lines to use bird-safe designs and mandated the retrofitting of existing hazardous poles where birds are at risk.

The United States Lacks a Comprehensive Federal Framework to Protect Birds from Power Lines

Requiring utilities to incorporate proven mitigation measures during the design, construction, and maintenance of transmission infrastructure can substantially reduce wildlife mortality.

No Federal Requirements to Prevent Harm: The United States lacks a unified, federal design code mandating bird-safe power lines and instead, the federal framework relies on the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA), which penalize utilities for the unpermitted killing of protected species. However this is a reactive approach forcing action only after harm has occurred. As an example, under the Reactive Retrofit Strategy mandated by 50 CFR § 22.260 and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Power Line General Permit, when an eagle is killed or injured on a power line, the utility must retrofit the lethal pole plus enough nearby structures to equal a total of 13 poles or a half-mile segment of line, whichever is less.

A Lack of Data on Actual Bird Electrocution: Thus, the scale of national bird mortality from power lines is drastically underestimated. There is no government surveillance program for bird and other wildlife fatalities, and the framework relies almost entirely on utility self-reporting. Because millions of miles of power lines cross remote areas where scavengers can quickly remove carcasses, most bird electrocutions are not documented. The widespread under-reporting masks the true scale of bird mortality and a legacy of hazardous, non-compliant poles exists.

Voluntary Industry Guidelines: Many companies adopt the guidance documents of the [Avian Power Line Interaction Committee \(APLIC\)](#) which includes dozens of electric utility companies, however compliance is voluntary and uneven. While many utilities have adopted Avian Protection Plans and proactively install bird-safe equipment and retrofit hazardous structures, others do little or no mitigation unless bird deaths trigger enforcement actions.

In short, there is little regulatory oversight to ensure utilities follow these recommendations, no nationwide compliance program, and no federal requirement that hazardous poles be systematically identified and retrofitted. The patchwork of protection varies considerably among utilities and states. Uniform national design standards requiring bird-safe transmission line design, oversight and compliance are needed.

Publications on Bird Electrocutions and Effective Mitigation Strategies

Reports

[Protecting birds on powerlines: a practical guide on the risks to birds from electricity transmission facilities and how to minimise any such adverse effects](#). On behalf of NABU - German Society for Nature Conservation, Registered Charity and BirdLife Partner Germany

Ferrer, M., Florencio, C., Muriel, R., Morandini, V., & García-Macía, J. (2026). [How to prioritize measures to reduce the electrocutions of birds in distribution power line networks](#). *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 69, e04318.

International Finance Corporation & European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. (2026). [Preventing Electrocution Risks for Birds on Distribution Lines: Tip Sheet](#). International Finance Corporation

Biasotto, L. D., Moreira, F., Bencke, G. A., & Ascensão, F. (2022). [Risk of bird electrocution in power lines: A framework for prioritizing species and areas for conservation and impact mitigation](#). *Animal Conservation*, 25(2), 285–296. doi.org

Ferrer, M., Morandini, V., Baumbusch, R., Muriel, R., De Lucas, M., & Calabuig, C. (2020). [Efficacy of different types of “bird flight diverter” in reducing bird mortality due to collision with transmission power lines](#). *Global Ecology and Conservation*, 23, e01130.

Dixon, A., Rahman, M. L., Galtbalt, B., Gunga, A., Sugarsaikhan, B., & Batbayar, N. (2017). [Avian electrocution rates associated with density of active small mammal holes and power-pole mitigation: Implications for the conservation of Threatened raptors in Mongolia](#). *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 36, 14–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2017.01.001>.

Bernardino, J., Bevanger, K., Barrientos, R., Dwyer, J. F., Marques, A. T., Martins, R. C., Shaw, J. M., Silva, J. P., & Moreira, F. (2018). [Bird collisions with power lines: State of the art and priority areas for research](#). *Biological Conservation*, 222, 1–13.

Manville, A. M., II. (2005). [Bird Strikes and Electrocutions at Power Lines. Communication Towers, and Wind Turbines: State of the Art and State of the Science – Next Steps Toward Mitigation](#) In C. J. Ralph & T. D. Rich (Eds.), *Bird Conservation Implementation and Integration in the Americas: Proceedings of the Third International Partners in Flight Conference* (March 20–24, 2002, Asilomar, California) (Vol. 2, General Technical Report PSW-GTR-191, pp. 1051–1064). Albany, CA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station.

Tintó, Albert; Real, Joan; Manyosa, Santi. [“Predicting and correcting electrocution of birds in Mediterranean areas”](#). *Journal of Wildlife Management*, 2010, 74(8): 1852-1862.



- [Mayrose et al. \(2024\)](#), published in *Ornithological Applications*, found that insulating just 4% of power pylons identified as the highest-risk structures could reduce Bonelli's Eagle electrocutions by approximately 80%.
- [Purevdorj et al. \(2025\)](#), published in the Journal of Raptor Research, documented the widespread high electrocution of Steppe Eagles and Golden Eagles on Mongolia's power network. While the Mongolian government amended the national standard in 2021 to include bird safety, "compliance needs to be enforced as dangerous lines continue to be constructed." The authors recommended insulating hazardous poles, installing bird-safe perch deterrents, and prioritizing retrofits in high-risk areas to reduce raptor mortality.
- [Kolnegari et al. \(2025\)](#), published by *Cambridge University Press* documented electrocutions of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and invertebrates across Iran's electrical network and found that most incidents occurred on properly functioning equipment whose design failed to account for wildlife contact. The authors recommend mitigation measures insulating energized components, redesigning hazardous equipment, and retrofitting existing infrastructure to protect wildlife while also reducing power outages and fire ignitions.

High-Voltage Transmission Lines Emit Corona Discharge, Audible Noise, and Ozone

High-voltage transmission lines can produce [corona discharge](#), a phenomenon in which the intense electric field surrounding energized conductors ionizes the surrounding air. The [result](#) is visible light, crackling and hissing sounds, ozone, and other reactive gases, while also creating radio interference.

Noise: Corona discharge is responsible for the crackling, buzzing, and/or humming [noise](#) often heard near transmission lines, particularly during damp, foggy, snowy or rainy weather. (Moisture increases electrical activity.) Because transmission-line noise contains low-frequency hum and broadband corona noise, A-weighted sound meters alone may not fully characterize what people experience. These meters can underestimate the low-frequency hum and high-frequency corona noise. Frequency-spectrum analysis and C- or Z-weighted measurements can provide a more complete assessment of transmission-line noise, particularly under wet-weather conditions when corona discharge is greatest.

[Zhang et al. \(2025\)](#), published in *Measurement*, conducted two years of monitoring at a 750-kV transmission line and found that the characteristic audible hum from high-voltage lines is most pronounced during rainy and snowy weather, when corona discharge intensifies, emphasizing the importance of accounting for weather when assessing transmission line noise.

Ozone: Corona discharge produces ozone (O₃) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) through ionization of the air.

Interference: Corona discharge can be a source of [higher current harmonics](#), creating "electromagnetic noise" across a wide range of frequencies, [interfering with technologies](#) like AM radios, emergency dispatch signals, and even wireless internet and other household technical systems.

Utilities and engineering organizations [recognize corona discharge as an issue](#) and transmission line designs often seek to minimize, but cannot completely eliminate, its occurrence.

High-voltage transmission lines and substations can pose a fire risk.

While wildfires can have multiple causes, utility equipment failures and inadequate maintenance have been responsible for numerous transmission line and substation fires.

The [California Fire Local 2881 Firefighters'](#) opposed the SDG&E Golden Pacific Powerlink Project stating, "The proposed transmission line would introduce significant new electrical infrastructure into some of Southern California's most wildfire prone terrain. California has learned hard lessons about the risks associated with overhead transmission systems during extreme fire weather. We should not be creating additional ignition risks in communities that already face the threat of catastrophic wildfire."

During a transmission line or substation fire, firefighters often cannot directly attack the fire until the utility has de-energized the equipment because of the risk of electrocution. Instead, firefighters are forced to focus on containing the fire and protecting nearby homes and vegetation while waiting for utility crews to disconnect power.

Examples of fires related to the electrical grid :

- **Camp Fire (California, 2018):** Ignited by PG&E transmission equipment, resulting in 85 deaths and the destruction of Paradise, California. According to [court documents](#).
- PG&E repeatedly ignored warnings about its aging power lines and faulty maintenance, and failed to follow state regulations showing "a callous disregard" for life and property.
- **Dixie Fire (California, 2021):** California investigators [concluded](#) PG&E equipment caused the fire, and violated state requirements in one of the largest wildfires in California history.
- **Maui Fire (Hawaii, 2023):** [Ongoing litigation](#) alleges Hawaiian Electric power lines contributed to the fire. Hawaiian Electric Industries reached a [\\$47.75 million settlement](#) with shareholders who claimed the company did not take appropriate action to reduce the risk that its utility poles could trigger wildfires.
- **Los Angeles fires (California, 2025):** Southern California Edison [acknowledged](#) its equipment may have been involved in the Hurst Fire. Investigators [concluded](#) that The Eaton fire was caused by electrical arcing on the utility's out-of-service tower. "When

bare, uninsulated wires touch or come close together it can cause arcing, which is when electricity jumps through the air, producing sparks.”

- **Smokehouse Creek Fire (Texas, 2024):** The largest wildfire in Texas history burned over 1 million acres. The Texas Attorney General [filed an injunction](#) against Xcel Energy (Southwestern Public Service Company), accusing the utility of negligence regarding the upkeep of aging utility poles.
- **Kincade Fire (California, 2019):** Ignited by a broken jumper cable on a PG&E high-voltage transmission tower. [State regulators fined](#) PG&E \$125 million after investigations revealed the utility failed to properly decommission or maintain the obsolete transmission equipment that triggered the blaze, which burned over 77,000 acres and forced the evacuation of nearly 200,000 people.
- **Fairview Fire (California, 2022):** Triggered when a drooping Southern California Edison (SCE) overhead line in Hemet swayed and made direct contact with a communications messenger wire, throwing hot electrical sparks into dry grass. The disaster resulted in two deaths, burned over 28,000 acres, and prompted a [\\$37 million federal lawsuit](#) accusing the utility company of negligence regarding line tension upkeep and vegetation management.
- **Labor Day Wildfires (Oregon & California, 2020):** Fierce winds downed power lines across the Pacific Northwest. In February 2026, PacifiCorp agreed to a [\\$575 million settlement](#) with the U.S. government to cover firefighting costs and public land restoration, adding to a rolling total of over \$2.2 billion in settlements negotiated with nearly 90% of individual claimants who accused the company of negligence.
- **Marshall Fire (Colorado, 2021):** Investigators [concluded](#) that uninsulated, sagging power lines operated by Xcel Energy slapped together during a high-wind storm, producing hot aluminum particles that ignited dry grass. It became the most destructive wildfire in Colorado history, destroying over 1,000 homes in Boulder County and causing upwards of \$2 billion in damages. In September 2025, Xcel Energy agreed to a \$640 million settlement to resolve the [massive consolidated victim lawsuits](#) over utility infrastructure failures.
- **Thomas Fire (2017):** Ignited when two Southern California Edison (SCE) power lines slapped together during high winds. SCE faced [massive litigation](#), eventually leading to a [multi-billion dollar settlement framework](#) to resolve claims related to the utility's infrastructure shortcomings and failure to clear vegetation around its lines.

“This injunction requiring Xcel to inspect and replace its dilapidated and damaged utility poles is critical for protecting the safety and livelihood of Texans,” said Attorney General Paxton. “This win is the first part of holding Xcel accountable and ensuring preventative measures are being taken as the case continues to move forward. Xcel has made the right decision in working with my office and ultimately agreeing to take these critical first steps. The Smokehouse Creek Fire caused devastation throughout the Texas Panhandle, and I will continue to fight to ensure that justice is served and that wildfires will no longer be sparked by the negligence of a utility provider.”- [Attorney General Paxton Secures Injunction Against Electric Company that Caused the Devastating Smokehouse Creek Fire](#)

Examples of substation fires include:

- **Heathrow Airport Substation Fire (United Kingdom, 2025):** The [official investigation](#) concluded that the fire was a preventable fault directly caused by National Grid's failure to maintain the infrastructure.
- **Maida Vale, London (2025):** A high-voltage [electrical event](#) caused the fire.
- **San Francisco Mission Substation Fire (December 2025):** PG&E was found [to have ignored](#) critical warning signs and regional audits revealed a year full of safety and maintenance violations across their local substations, including unaddressed oil leaks, loose wires, and broken cooling fans.

Excerpt from “Allocating Utility Wildfire Costs: Options and Issues for Consideration” by The California Legislative Analyst’s Office.

Utilities Start a Small Portion of Fires, but They Are Often the Largest and Most Damaging

- Only about 10 percent of fires are started by utility equipment, and many of those fires result in little or no property damage.
- However, some of the most damaging fires are started by utility equipment. For example, utility powerlines caused at least 8 of the 20 most destructive fires (40 percent) in California’s history. Seven of these utility-caused fires occurred since 2007, and six have occurred since 2015.
- Wildfires caused by powerlines can be particularly damaging, in part, because some of the factors that cause utility ignitions—such as high winds damaging electrical lines—also contribute to a rapid spread of fire that is difficult to control. For example, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) investigations, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) equipment started the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, which destroyed nearly 19,000 structures and killed 86 people. PG&E estimates that it could be liable for up to \$15 billion in damages from the fire.

Further, birds electrocuted on power lines have [ignited wildfires](#) after falling into dry vegetation, with documented incidents reported in the United States, Spain, Iran, Australia.

Every new transmission corridor and substation introduces another potential ignition source into the landscape. Fire hazards associated should be considered alongside public health, environmental, and economic impacts during project approval and siting.

The US Lacks A Regulatory Framework To Protect Public Health.

Key Deficiencies in the U.S. Regulatory Framework

There is essentially no federal regulatory framework to address health impacts on non-ionizing EMF emitted by high-voltage transmission lines and substations. The United States does not have health-based federal safety standards, as the EPA was defunded from its EMF and health activities decades ago. This is only one of many regulatory deficiencies. Existing federal and state oversight also fails to adequately address numerous public health, environmental, monitoring, disclosure, and risk assessment issues associated with high-voltage transmission lines and substations.

Table 1 lists key regulatory deficiencies at the federal level.

Table 1: US Federal Regulatory Framework for Nonionizing EMF and Public Health Protection: Assumptions v. Reality

Assumed Element	Reality
Federal safety standards were developed to protect human health.	✗ No federal safety limits for magnetic or electric field power frequency EMF. EPA was defunded from bioeffect research in the mid 90s.
Agencies with health and environmental expertise review the current science to ensure safety for the public.	✗ No federal agencies have shown any review of the science on EMF for decades.
Agencies with wildlife and agriculture expertise have reviewed science to ensure safety for livestock, agriculture and wildlife.	✗ No comprehensive federal review to determine whether long-term EMF exposure is safe for wildlife, livestock, or agriculture.
Industry IEEE and ICNIRP limits, used by the utility companies, protect against long term health effects like cancer.	✗ IEEE limits are designed only to protect against nerve stimulation from short term exposure
Industry IEEE limits protect people with medical issues, including those who have pacemakers or other implanted devices.	✗ IEEE explicitly states its standards are not intended to apply to patients under medical care and may not be protective for people using medical devices or implants.
Robust research by health and environmental agencies is always investigating EMF impacts to health and environment.	✗ No current research activities are being conducted by any federal agency.
Premarket safety testing for EMF emitted by high voltage transmission lines and substations.	✗ Never performed. When new higher power transmission lines are proposed, there is no requirement to test for health effects.

Requirement to model or disclose expected magnetic or electric field levels before construction.	✗ No requirements to model, measure, or disclose EMF levels. Such requirements exist only in certain states or as conditions of individual permitting processes.
Nationwide EMF level measuring and monitoring	✗ No national program to measure and monitor EMF levels nationwide. Defunded in the 90s.
Post-market surveillance to ensure utilities are maintaining EMF levels they presented in the application process.	✗ No oversight. Utilities do not have yearly audits to show compliance. It's the honor system.
Post-market medical and environmental surveillance to gather data on health effects.	✗ No reporting system. No surveillance system. No ability to analyze data as it is not collected.
Oversight and enforcement for compliance of network infrastructure	✗ No federal program auditing sites.
No setbacks for schools or safeguards and risk reduction policies for vulnerable groups.	✗ No measures to reduce exposure to children and the medically vulnerable. No increased oversight for exposure at schools and daycare.
Transparency regarding EMF exposures from equipment and in nearby homes.	✗ No requirement that EMF from grid equipment be publicly posted. No online maps with permit information or EMF level report. Companies do not have to model EMF in your home if you are near a power line.
Occupational health EMF protection program	✗ No robust EMF occupational health program exists to characterize worker EMF exposures and ensure protection. Activities by occupational health agencies were dismantled years ago.

Countries That Have Implemented Measures To Protect Public Health.

In contrast to the U.S., several countries have adopted exposure limits, precautionary siting policies, or other measures based in part on research linking long-term exposure to elevated magnetic fields with an increased risk of childhood leukemia. As detailed in Table 2, the focus is generally on mitigating exposure in homes, schools, childcare facilities, hospitals, and other sensitive areas. Many of these countries also conduct national EMF monitoring programs and have regulatory oversight and compliance mechanisms to assess, track, and manage EMF exposure levels.

Country	Public Health Measure and/or Recommendations
---------	--

The Netherlands	• Since 2005, policies have been in place to reduce EMF in homes, schools, and kindergartens. The government recommended that local authorities maintain a distance between high voltage power lines and homes, schools, kindergartens, daycares and nurseries), so that children are not exposed to levels higher than 4 mG • In 2013, houses under 380–220 kV lines were bought out due to elevated exposure. • In 2023, based on a scientific literature review and recommendations of the Health Council, the government issued an updated and expanded policy to prevent new situations where people stay for a long time in the area near overhead power lines, substations and electrical grid equipment where the magnetic field exceeds 4 mG (annual average).
Belgium	• Flanders recommends new power lines should be avoided near schools and childcare centers, and exposure over homes should be minimized. Year-averaged exposure near new schools and childcare centers should not exceed 4 mG. • In Brussels, transformers near areas where children under 15 are must maintain a 24-hour average below 4 mG.
Germany	• A 2013 Ordinance requires all feasible measures to minimize EMF exposure for transmission lines, substations and railways. • High voltage transmission lines cannot be erected over buildings intended for long-term human occupancy. • The Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS) recommends precautionary measures because “In addition to the established health effects, there are scientific indications for health risks at low field strengths.” and they recommend that “The population should be informed about the known and suspected effects of the fields and about the field intensities of the relevant field sources such as high-voltage lines or electrical appliances.”
Israel	• The maximum permissible ELF-EMF exposure in schools and residences is 4 mG per recommendations of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Health. • Ministries recommend minimizing long-term exposures, particularly for schools and residences.
Denmark	• Utilities must measure magnetic fields at new installations; annual averages should not exceed 4 mG. • No kindergartens or new buildings may be built near high-voltage lines.
France	• Ministerial guidance discourages new hospitals, maternity wards, and childcare facilities near power lines, cables, and transformers where fields exceed 1 μT. • The grid operator must monitor EMF emissions near power lines, and citizens can request measurements via local authorities.
French Polynesia	• The government-run public awareness campaign advises maintaining at least 1–1.5 meters from induction stoves and other EMF-generating appliances.

Slovenia	• ELF limits are set at 10% of the EU reference value for new or modified installations near residences, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, playgrounds, parks, and public buildings.
Switzerland	• The Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection Act establishes precautionary EMF exposure limits for new installations at 1 μT (10 mG) called an installation limit value. The country also measures, monitors, and reports EMF levels for transmission lines and substations.
Croatia	• Reduced ELF-EMF limits apply to sensitive areas, including homes, offices, schools, playgrounds, kindergartens, maternity wards, hospitals, and care facilities.
Luxembourg	• Ministerial recommendation exposure limit of 4 mG for vulnerable populations like pregnant women. • Ministerial recommendation prohibits new living spaces close to high voltage lines.
Norway	• A 0.4 μT “investigation level” applies to new homes, schools, kindergartens, and power lines; if exceeded, exposure-reduction measures are evaluated and implemented if reasonable.
Italy	• The 2017 Environment Ministry Decree recommends minimizing indoor ELF-EMF exposure; a precautionary “attention value” applies to 24-hour median exposure in homes, schools, playgrounds, and other spaces where people spend over 4 hours. • Three regions—Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, and Tuscany—enforced strict “quality objective” guidelines for new power line installations near homes and schools with a magnetic field limit of 2 mG.
Liechtenstein	• Has an installation reference value of 10 mG for places with sensible use and/or new installations not to be exceeded more than 1.5 times on a maximum of five days a year.
Toronto, Canada	• In 2008, the Toronto city council adopted a prudent avoidance policy to minimise EMF exposure, particularly for young children. Any recreation or parkland, residential, school or day nurseries newly planned or amended, which are adjacent to power line corridors, must adopt low or no cost measures to minimize exposures to electromagnetic fields. Furthermore, a health impact assessment is required to minimise any increase to yearly average exposures when new or upgraded high-voltage transmission lines are proposed within the city.
United Kingdom	• The government promotes a precautionary policy to reduce EMF including optimum phasing for high-voltage overhead power lines, a series of engineering measures designed to reduce net currents, and encourages substations be sited away from homes. • For low-voltage distribution networks (132 kV and below), the precautionary best practice measures to reduce EMF are set out in

	Engineering Recommendation G92 published by the Energy Networks Association.
Finland	- The radiation authority STUK advises avoiding permanent residences where magnetic flux density continuously exceeds ~0.4 µT. - Recommendation to keep electric and magnetic fields near humans as low as possible.
Sweden	The Swedish Radiation Safety Authority recommends in Magnetic fields - Strålsäkerhetsmyndigheten: “Recommendations: Due to the concern over a link between weak, low-frequency magnetic fields and the incidence of childhood leukaemia, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority issues the following recommendations in connection with social planning and building projects: - Work towards the design or location of new power lines and electrical installations so as to limit exposure to magnetic fields - Avoid locating new housing, schools and pre-schools in close proximity to electrical installations generating elevated magnetic fields - Work towards limiting magnetic fields that deviate substantially from what can be deemed normal in home, school, pre-school and occupational environments.”

US State Power-Frequency EMF Policies and Permitting Requirements

Table 3 summarizes U.S. state policies related to power-frequency magnetic fields (MFs), health-based setbacks, right-of-way distances, and other EMF-related requirements for high-voltage transmission lines. It is not intended to be a comprehensive review of all state utility regulations or transmission line permitting requirements. Rather, it highlights the limited number of states that have adopted policies specifically addressing magnetic fields, public health, or separation distances, illustrating the overall lack of consistent health-based protections across the United States.

Have something to add to this? Please send an email to Theodora@ehsciences.org.

State	Location	Electric Field (kV/m)	Magnetic Field (mG)
California¹ New schools must be at least 100 ft (50–133 kV), 150 ft (220–230 kV), and 350 ft (500–550 kV) from transmission line easements.			

¹ [CPUC EMF Design Guidelines for Electrical Facilities](#); [PUC Actions Regarding EMFs](#)



CPUC requires utilities to implement "no-cost and low-cost" EMF mitigation measures and to create a Field Management Plan on how they will reduce EMF exposure for new projects. No limits for electric and magnetic fields.²

Connecticut³

The Connecticut Siting Council must establish a project-specific buffer zone that considers "residential areas, private or public schools, licensed childcare centers, licensed youth camps or public playgrounds adjacent to the proposed route of the overhead portions and the level of the voltage of the overhead portions and any existing overhead transmission lines on the proposed route. Overhead transmission lines (345 kV or greater) adjacent to residential areas, private/public schools, childcare facilities, youth camps or playgrounds, are restricted unless the applicant can demonstrate that undergrounding will be technically infeasible or may result in an unreasonable economic burden on the ratepayers of the state. EMF measurements and EMF mitigation to satisfy the Council's Best Management Practices are required.

Hawaii

1998 The Department of Health, in response to continuing but inconclusive scientific investigation concerning electric and magnetic fields (EMF) from low-frequency power sources, recommends a "prudent avoidance" policy.⁴

Florida⁵	(230-500 kV)	Within right-of-way	10	NA
		Edge of right-of-way	2	200 ⁶
	(230 kV or less)	Within right-of-way	8	NA
		Edge of right-of-way	2	150

Iowa

Iowa Code Chapter 478 Section 478.20 states that no transmission line of 69 kV or more can be constructed within 100 feet of any dwelling house or building without a mutual agreement, unless it runs along a public highway or railway right-of-way.⁷

Minnesota⁸	Within right-of-way	8	NA
------------------------------	---------------------	---	----

No high voltage transmission line may be routed through state or national parks, historic, scientific and natural areas unless the transmission line would not materially damage or impair the purpose for which the area was designated and no feasible and prudent alternative exists. Economic considerations alone do not justify use of these areas.

Prime farmland exclusion. No large electric power generating plant site may be permitted where the developed portion of the plant site, excluding water storage reservoirs and cooling ponds, includes more than 0.5 acres of prime farmland per megawatt of net generating capacity,

² APPENDIX 3. ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS AND OTHER FIELD-RELATED CONCERNS

https://ia.cpuc.ca.gov/Environment/info/aspen/viejssystem/final_apps/App%203-EMF%20Health%20Effects.pdf

³ [Connecticut Public Act 04-246 \(codified under Connecticut General Statutes § 16-50p\)](#); [Comments of Richard Blumenthal, Attorney General for the State of Conn., Concerning P.A. 04-146, Conn. Siting Council Docket No. 272](#) (July 19, 2004)

⁴ Hawaii DOH POLICY RELATING TO ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS FROM POWER-FREQUENCY SOURCES, (1994) https://www.hawaiianelectric.com/documents/about_us/environment/EMF_DOH_PUC_combined.pdf

⁵ [Section 403.061\(30\), Florida Statutes](#) and the rule is [62-814, Florida Administrative Code](#). Compliance with the EMF standards is demonstrated through monitoring and reporting by the utilities.

⁶ Can be waived by landowner

⁷ Iowa 2025 Iowa Code. Title XI - NATURAL RESOURCES. [Chapter 478 - ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION LINES Section 478.20 - Distance from buildings.](#)

⁸ The Minnesota 8 kV 1m maximum field limit is applied on a case-by-case basis by the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MEQB), which has jurisdiction over lines of nominal voltage 200kV and higher. The limit is included in construction permits granted by the MEQB rather than in a formal rule [e.g., Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MEQB), 1977]. Minnesota does not have an edge-of-right-of-way field limit. 12 kV 1m limit on the HVDC nominal electric field. [MPUC Large Energy Infrastructure Guidance.](#)

Montana⁹	Within right-of-way: road crossing	7	NA
	Edge of right-of-way	1 ²	NA
New Jersey¹⁰	Within right-of-way	NA	NA
	Edge of right-of-way	3	NA
New York¹¹	Within right-of-way: open	11.8	NA
	Within right of way: public road	7	NA
	Within right of way: private road	11	NA
	Edge of right of way	1.6	200
	Applicants for major transmission projects are required to prepare EMF studies that model EMF (baseline and proposed with multiple loading conditions, out 500 feet beyond right of way on both sides. ¹²		
North Dakota¹³	Within right of way	9	NA
	Edge of right of way	NA	NA
Ohio¹⁴ If the centerline of a proposed transmission facility or the boundary of a substation footprint is within 100 feet of an occupied residence or institution, the utility must provide electric and magnetic field strength levels, references on the current state of knowledge and the company policy on EMF.			
Oregon¹⁵	Areas accessible to the public, 1 meter above ground	9	NA
	Within right of way	9	NA
	Edge of right-of-way	NA	NA

⁹ Minnesota Administrative Rules CHAPTER 7850, SITE OR ROUTE PERMIT; POWER PLANT OR LINE
<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/rules/7850/full>

¹⁰ Guideline established in 1981 by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).

¹¹ Article VII, "Siting of Major Utility Transmission Facilities," is the section of the New York State Public Service Law that requires EMF studies and disclosure for major transmission projects <https://dps.ny.gov/article-vii-major-electric-and-gas-transmission-facilities>
 New York PSC policy directs utilities to design transmission lines so magnetic fields at the edge of the right-of-way generally do not exceed 200 milligauss under normal operating conditions. See also <https://dps.ny.gov/article-vii-major-electric-and-gas-transmission-facilities>, [The New York State Certification Review Process For Major Electric and Fuel Gas Transmission Facilities](#) and [Siting New Energy Infrastructure Issue Brief New York State Energy Plan 2009](#)

¹² As examples, [the NY National Grid Lockport-Mortimer Line 111 Rebuild Project i 56-mile, 115 kV single-circuit transmission line](#), [Appendix D: EMF Study link](#); [FLAT CREEK SOLAR Permit Application No. 23-00054](#);

¹³ An informal requirement of the North Dakota Public Service Commission (NDPSC).

¹⁴ [Ohio Administrative Code Rule 4906-4-08\(A\)\(14\)](#)

¹⁵ [OAR 345-024-0090 Siting Standards for Transmission Lines](#)

Virginia

The Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC) is legally mandated to evaluate the environmental impacts of any proposed high-voltage transmission line project (typically 138 kV or larger). The SCC's official Guidelines for Transmission Line Applications explicitly require utilities to submit detailed electric and magnetic field (EMF) calculations. However, they are not required to provide that information in the early stages during the preliminary route-refinement and community outreach phase.

Comparison of Health-Based Magnetic Field Levels and Regulatory Limits

When evaluating the potential health risks of magnetic fields from proposed high-voltage transmission lines, it is important to compare the industry presented limits with the magnetic field EMF levels at which scientific studies have reported health effects.

However, U.S. IEEE and international ICNIRP exposure limits (9,100 mG and 2,000 mG, respectively) are based only on preventing short-term acute effects such as nerve stimulation and explicitly do not address cancer or other potential long-term health effects. International scientific organizations acknowledge that epidemiological studies have consistently linked long-term magnetic field exposure above approximately 3–4 mG (0.3–0.4 μ T) with an increased risk of childhood leukemia. In response, several countries recommend limiting long-term exposure, particularly for children. Since the WHO IARC classified extremely low-frequency magnetic fields as a Group 2B Possible Human Carcinogen in 2001, additional peer-reviewed studies have continued to report associations with childhood leukemia as well as other health issues such as Alzheimer's disease, with some studies reporting elevated risks at magnetic field levels as low as 1–3 mG.

Table 4 compares the magnetic field levels at which scientific studies have reported health effects with the much higher exposure limits established by regulatory organizations.

Entity	Policy or Recommendation to Limit Public Exposure	Magnetic Field (mG)
IEEE, 2019 ¹⁶	IEEE limits are only designed to protect against the “established” acute (short term exposure) effects of pain and involuntary muscle contractions related to electrostimulation of nerves and muscles. They are not designed to address cancer or effects of long term exposure. IEEE states the limits “do not guarantee or ensure safety, security, health, or environmental protection, or ensure against interference with or from other devices or networks” and are “not intended to apply to the exposure of patients by or under the direction of physicians and medical professionals... and might not be protective with respect to the use of medical devices or implants.”	9,100

¹⁶ [International Committee for Electromagnetic Safety \(ICES\). IEEE Standard for Safety Levels with Respect to Human Exposure to Electric, Magnetic, and Electromagnetic Fields, 0 Hz to 300 GHz. IEEE Std C95.1-2019 New York, NY: IEEE, 2019 PDF](#)

ICNIRP, 2010¹⁷¹⁸	ICNIRP states that its limits are based on “established” acute (short-term exposure) effects of primarily nerve stimulation, shock and burn. ICNIRP limits are not based on cancer risk. ICNIRP states: “epidemiological studies have consistently found that everyday chronic low-intensity (above 0.3– 0.4 T) [3–4 mG] power frequency magnetic field exposure is associated with an increased risk of childhood leukemia. IARC has classified such fields as possibly carcinogenic. However, a causal relationship between magnetic fields and childhood leukemia has not been established nor have any other long-term effects been established. The absence of established causality means that this effect cannot be addressed in the basic restrictions.” ICNIRP changed its Guidelines in 2010, as it was previously 1000 mG.	2,000
European Union 1999/519/EC	Many European countries such as Estonia, Greece, Austria, Portugal, Hungary and Cyprus have adopted policies with the 1999 limit recommended by the EU- Magnetic field of 100 μ T or 1,000 mG, half of ICNIRP limits and about one-ninth (11%) of the IEEE limit.	1,000
Countries include; Netherlands, Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Israel	Avoiding situations in which children are exposed for long periods at home and/or school due to scientific research linking exposure to childhood leukemia.	4
European Commission Scientific Committee (SCENIHR), 2015¹⁹	While they conclude no causal relationship is “proven” they state “The new epidemiological studies are consistent with earlier findings of an increased risk of childhood leukaemia with estimated daily average exposures above 0.3 to 0.4 μ T. [3–4 mG]”	3–4
WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2001²⁰	Classified extremely low-frequency magnetic fields as a Group 2B Possible Human Carcinogen in 2001 based primarily on studies linking long-term childhood EMF exposure above approximately 0.3–0.4 μ T (3–4 mG) with increased leukemia risk.	3–4
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, 1998²¹	“A majority of the Working Group concluded that classification of ELF EMF as possibly carcinogenic (Group 2B) is a conservative, public-health decision based on limited evidence of an increased risk for childhood leukemias with residential exposure and an increased occurrence of CLL associated with occupational exposure.”	3–4

17

¹⁸ International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP). ICNIRP Statement - Guidelines for Limiting Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields (1 Hz to 100 kHz). *Health Phys* 99:818-836, 2010; This was based on revised estimates of the threshold for acute nerve stimulation allowing a doubling of the level. The 1998 ICNIRP guidelines had set the public reference level for 50 Hz magnetic fields at 1000 mG and for 60 Hz at 830 mG.

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/emerging/docs/scenihr_o_041.pdf

²⁰ Non-ionizing Radiation, Part 1: Static and Extremely Low-frequency (ELF) Electric and Magnetic Fields. IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans Volume 80;

²¹ NIEHS 1998. *Assessment of Health Effects from Exposure to Power-Line Frequency Electric and Magnetic Fields. Working Group Report* (Portier C, Wolfe M, eds). NIH publication no. 98-3981. Research Triangle Park, NC:National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

Bio-Initiative Report recommendation 2007²²	"It is also recommended for that a 1 mG limit be established for existing habitable space for children and/or women who are pregnant (because of the possible link between childhood leukemia and in utero exposure to ELF)."	1
Building Biology Guidelines Germany (SleepingAreas)²³	"The Building Biology Evaluation Guidelines are based on the precautionary principle. They are specifically designed for sleeping areas associated with long-term risks and a most sensitive window of opportunity for regeneration."	.2
Examples of Peer Reviewed Scientific Research		
Cancer	In the decades since the IARC 2001 classification, several new studies ²⁴ and reviews of the research have continued to associate long term exposure to childhood leukemia ²⁵ as well as poorer survival. ²⁶ Peer reviewed scientific studies have also reported increased risk for brain ²⁷ and central nervous system ²⁸ tumors,	3-4

²² "ELF limits should be set below those exposure levels that have been linked in childhood leukemia studies to increased risk of disease, plus an additional safety factor. It is no longer acceptable to build new power lines and electrical facilities that place people in ELF environments that have been determined to be risky...It is also recommended for that a 1 mG limit be established for existing habitable space for children and/or women who are pregnant (because of the possible link between childhood leukemia and in utero exposure to ELF)." https://bioinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/sec01_2007_summary_for_public.pdf

²³ https://www.baubiologie.de/downloads/english/richtwerte_2008_englisch.pdf

²⁴ Lowenthal RM, Tuck DM, Bray IC. [Residential exposure to electric power transmission lines and risk of lymphoproliferative and myeloproliferative disorders: a case-control study](#). Intern Med J. 2007 Sep;37(9):614-9. doi: 10.1111/j.1445-5994.2007.01389.; Draper G, Vincent T, Kroll M E, Swanson J. [Childhood cancer in relation to distance from high voltage power lines in England and Wales: a case-control study](#) BMJ 2005; 330 :1290 doi:10.1136/bmj.330.7503.1290; Kabuto, M., Nitta, H., Yamamoto, S., Yamaguchi, N., Akiba, S., et al., 2006. [Childhood leukemia and magnetic fields in Japan: a case-control study of childhood leukemia and residential power-frequency magnetic fields in Japan](#). Int. J. Cancer 119, 643–650; Schuz, J., Svendsen, A.L., Linet, M.S., McBride, M.L., Roman, E., Feychting, M., et al., 2007. [Nighttime exposure to electromagnetic fields and childhood leukemia: an extended pooled analysis](#). Am. J. Epidemiol 166, 263–269.; Feizi AA, Arabi MA. [Acute childhood leukemias and exposure to magnetic fields generated by high voltage overhead power lines - a risk factor in Iran](#). Asian Pac J Cancer Prev. 2007 Jan-Mar;8(1):69-72. PMID: 17477775.; Abdul Rahman HI, Shah SA, Alias H, Ibrahim HM. [A case-control study on the association between environmental factors and the occurrence of acute leukemia among children in Klang Valley, Malaysia](#). Asian Pac J Cancer Prev. 2008 Oct-Dec;9(4):649-52. PMID: 19256754; Sohrabi MR, Tarjoman T, Abadi A, Yavari P. [Living near overhead high voltage transmission power lines as a risk factor for childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia: a case-control study](#). Asian Pac J Cancer Prev. 2010;11(2):423-7. PMID: 20843128.; Tabrizi MM, Bidgoli SA. [Increased risk of childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia \(ALL\) by prenatal and postnatal exposure to high voltage power lines: a case control study in Isfahan, Iran](#). Asian Pac J Cancer Prev. 2015;16(6):2347-50. doi: 10.7314/apjcp.2015.16.6.2347. PMID: 25824762.

²⁵ Brabant C, Honvo G, Demonceau C, Tirelli E, Léonard F, Bruyère O. [Effects of extremely low frequency magnetic fields on animal cancer and DNA damage: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#). Prog Biophys Mol Biol. 2024 Dec 31:S0079-6107(24)00116-0. doi: 10.1016/j.pbiomolbio.2024.12.005; Brabant, C., Geerinck, A., Beaudart, C., Tirelli, E., Geuzaine, C., & Bruyère, O. (2022). [Exposure to magnetic fields and childhood leukemia: A systematic review and meta-analysis of case-control and cohort studies](#). Reviews on Environmental Health; and Carpenter, D. O. (2019). [Extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields and cancer: How source of funding affects results](#). Environmental Research, 178, 108688.; P. Todorović et al., "Health Effects of Extremely Low-Frequency Electromagnetic Field Exposure From High-Voltage Power Lines and Substations: A Scoping Review of Primary Empirical Research." in IEEE Access, doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2026.3671962.

²⁶ Svendsen, A.L., Wiehkopf, T., Kaatsch, P., Schuz, J., 2007. [Exposure to magnetic fields and survival after diagnosis of childhood leukemia: a German cohort study](#). Cancer Epidemiol. Biomark. Prev. 16, 1167–1171.

²⁷ Carles, C., Esquirol, Y., Turuban, M., Piel, C., Migault, L., Pouchieu, C., Bouvier, G., Fabbro-Peray, P., Lebaillly, P., & Baldi, I. (2020). [Residential proximity to power lines and risk of brain tumor in the general population](#). Environmental Research, 185, 109473.

²⁸ Correa-Correa V et al., [Extremely low-frequency magnetic fields \(ELF-MF\) and radiofrequency: Risk of childhood CNS tumors in a city with elevated ELF-MF exposure](#). Environ Res. 2025 Dec 1;286(Pt 2):122858. doi: 10.1016/j.envres.2025.122858.

	breast cancer ²⁹ and melanoma ³⁰ . Case-control studies ³¹ on children with Downs syndrome (who have a 20-fold increased risk of developing leukemia) suggest magnetic fields may act as a promoter or causal factor in this genetically susceptible subgroup of children. Another study of childhood leukemia cases near elevated powerline EMF levels found evidence that certain genetic variants related to DNA repair may make some children more susceptible to the effects. ³²	
Dementia and Alzheimer's	Studies have reported higher rates of dementia and Alzheimer's disease close to high voltage powerlines. ³³	Starting at .5 mG with the stronger associations at 1–3 mG.

Local U.S. Government Policies That Are More Protective Than State Requirements

Communities are increasingly adopting local setback requirements to create greater separation between high-voltage transmission lines and homes. In South Dakota, [Deuel County](#) adopted one of the strongest local transmission line setback ordinances in the United States, requiring new 345 kV and higher transmission lines to be located at least 2,000 feet from homes, although the ordinance was later amended so that landowners can consent to reduced setbacks. [Brookings County](#), South Dakota has a 1,000 foot setback. [Power County, Idaho](#) has a 1,500-foot setback from residences, schools, hospitals, colleges, and daycare centers.

²⁹ Sun, J. W., Li, X. R., Gao, H. Y., Yin, J. Y., Qin, Q., Nie, S. F., & Wei, S. (2013). [Electromagnetic field exposure and male breast cancer risk: a meta-analysis of 18 studies](#). *Asian Pacific journal of cancer prevention : APJCP*, 14(1), 523–528.

³⁰ Khan, M. W., Juutilainen, J., Naarala, J., & Roivainen, P. (2022). [Residential extremely low frequency magnetic fields and skin cancer](#). *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 79(1), 49–54.

³¹ Mejia-Arangure JM, Fajardo-Gutierrez A, Perez-Saldivar ML, Gorodezky C, Martinez-Avalos A, Romero-Guzman L, Campo-Martinez MA, Flores-Lujano J, Salamanca-Gomez F, Velasquez-Perez L. [Magnetic fields and acute leukemia in children with Down syndrome](#). *Epidemiology*. 2007 Jan;18(1):158-61. doi: 10.1097/01.ede.0000248186.31452.be

³² Yang Y, Jin X, Yan C, Tian Y, Tang J, Shen X. [Case-only study of interactions between DNA repair genes \(hMLH1, APEX1, MGMT, XRCC1 and XPD\) and low-frequency electromagnetic fields in childhood acute leukemia](#). *Leuk Lymphoma*. 2008 Dec;49(12):2344-50. doi: 10.1080/10428190802441347. PMID: 19052983.

³³ Sandoval-Diez N, Loizeau N, Huss A, Röösli M, Vienneau D. L. [Long-term residential magnetic field exposure and neurodegenerative disease mortality: An 18-year nationwide cohort study in Switzerland](#). *Environ Int*. 2026 Feb;208:110145. doi: 10.1016/j.envint.2026.110145; Ghiasvand S, Tegegne GT, Tabatabaei-Jafari H, Mazumdar S, Ambikairajah A, Bagheri N. Social and environmental determinants of dementia risk: An umbrella review. *J Alzheimers Dis*. 2026 Jun 12:13872877261456777. doi: 10.1177/13872877261456777. ; Huss A, Spoerri A, Egger M, Röösli M; Swiss National Cohort Study. [Residence near power lines and mortality from neurodegenerative diseases: longitudinal study of the Swiss population](#). *Am J Epidemiol*. 2009 Jan 15;169(2):167-75. doi: 10.1093/aje/kwn297. Epub 2008 Nov 5. PMID: 18990717.; Jalilian H, Teshnizi SH, Röösli M, Neghab M. [Occupational exposure to extremely low frequency magnetic fields and risk of Alzheimer disease: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#). *Neurotoxicology*. 2018 Dec;69:242-252. doi: 10.1016/j.neuro.2017.12.005; Davanipour Z, Sobel E. [Long-term exposure to magnetic fields and the risks of Alzheimer's disease and breast cancer: Further biological research](#). *Pathophysiology*. 2009 Aug;16(2-3):149-56. doi: 10.1016/j.pathophys.2009.01.005. Epub 2009 Mar 10. PMID: 19278839.

Policy Recommendations

The United States lacks a comprehensive public health regulatory framework governing electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure from electrical infrastructure. Unlike air pollution, drinking water, or hazardous chemicals, there are no federal health-based exposure standards, no nationwide EMF measuring or monitoring program, no setback requirements for schools or hospitals, no post-construction compliance program, and no requirement that utilities publicly disclose EMF levels before or after projects are built.

The appropriate framework for regulating EMF exposure is a public health risk mitigation approach. History has repeatedly shown that by the time causation is considered fully "established," countless people have already been harmed. Rather than waiting decades for absolute scientific certainty, policymakers should reduce unnecessary exposure where credible evidence of risk exists, particularly for children.

As new high voltage transmission lines and substations are rapidly expanding to serve AI data centers, policymakers should adopt a comprehensive public health risk mitigation framework that emphasizes transparency, exposure reduction, and protection of vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women.

Federal Regulatory Reform Recommendations

- **Science Based Safety Standards:** Congress should restore a federal EMF public health program within health and environmental agencies to independently review the scientific evidence and develop public health-based limits and recommendations for long-term EMF exposure. The United States should no longer rely solely on IEEE and ICNIRP engineering guidelines, which were developed only to prevent short-term nerve stimulation and do not address long-term outcomes such as cancer, neurodegenerative disease, reproductive effects, or childhood health.
- **Nationwide Monitoring Program:** Federal agencies should establish a nationwide EMF monitoring and reporting program similar to existing air and water quality monitoring systems.
- **Transparency:** Utilities should be required to model, measure, and publicly disclose electric and magnetic field levels before construction, after projects become operational, and periodically throughout the life of the facility. This should include levels not only at the edge of the ROW, but also at least 100-500 feet out so that the public is informed of the exposures in their homes, workplaces, recreation areas and schools.
- **Compliance and Oversight:** Federal regulations should also require post-construction compliance monitoring, independent verification of EMF modeling, and corrective action if actual field levels exceed projected levels or if future system upgrades substantially increase exposures.
- **Health and Environmental Review:** Federal permitting for new high-voltage transmission lines, substations, and major electrical infrastructure should require Health Impact Assessments evaluating potential impacts on human health, children, agriculture and wildlife.

Policy Recommendations: Protecting Wildlife and Ecosystems

Current U.S. permitting for high-voltage transmission lines largely evaluates wildlife impacts through habitat loss, vegetation clearing, and bird collisions. However, environmental reviews generally do not assess the biological effects of EMF on wildlife, despite a growing body of scientific literature documenting effects on pollinators, birds, fish, mammals, and other species. Credible evidence of ecological harm has been identified, particularly for threatened, endangered, or declining species. Thus, exposures should be reduced and EMF should be evaluated as an environmental stressor alongside other project impacts.

A comprehensive set of recommendations are detailed in the policy review paper by Levitt et al. (2025) published in *Frontiers in Public Health* entitled, [“Flora and fauna: how nonhuman species interact with natural and man-made EMF at ecosystem levels and public policy recommendations.”](#) Federal and state agencies should:

- Require environmental impact assessments for new transmission lines and substations to evaluate EMF effects on wildlife, including pollinators, birds, mammals, amphibians, and aquatic species.
- Develop science-based EMF exposure guidelines that protect wildlife, recognizing that current engineering standards were developed only to prevent acute effects in humans and do not evaluate ecological impacts.
- Avoid locating new transmission corridors, substations, and associated infrastructure adjacent to wildlife refuges, conservation lands, critical habitat, wetlands, fish spawning areas, migratory corridors, and other ecologically sensitive areas whenever feasible.
- Require utilities to evaluate cumulative environmental impacts, including interactions between EMF exposure and other stressors such as pesticides, habitat fragmentation, climate change, and pollution.
- Expand federal research programs to investigate long-term ecological impacts of EMFs from electrical infrastructure.
- Establish long-term ecological monitoring programs before and after construction to evaluate wildlife populations, pollinator abundance, reproductive success, biodiversity, and habitat quality near transmission corridors and substations.
- Incorporate wildlife experts, ecologists, and environmental health scientists into transmission planning and permitting decisions to ensure biological impacts receive the same consideration as engineering and economic factors.

State and Local Public Health and Siting Policy Recommendations

State and local governments should exercise their existing land-use authority to protect residents.

- **Risk Mitigation:** States and municipalities should adopt EMF policies that prioritize exposure reduction where people live, work, learn, and receive medical care.
- **EMF Limits:** States can set stringent limits for electric and magnetic exposure.

- **Setbacks:** Establish minimum setback distances for new transmission lines and substations and avoid routing near to:
 - Homes
 - Schools
 - Daycare centers
 - Playgrounds
 - Parks
 - Hospitals
 - Nursing homes
- **Protect Children and Vulnerable Populations:** prohibit new schools, childcare facilities, playgrounds, and athletic fields from being located adjacent to high-voltage transmission corridors.
- **Documentation:** Require utilities to document and use engineering approaches that minimize EMF exposure including optimum phasing, conductor configuration, line design, and other low-cost mitigation measures.
- **Transparency and Public Right-to-Know:** Utilities should be required to publicly disclose:
 - Existing baseline EMF measurements before construction.
 - Projected magnetic and electric field levels after construction.
 - EMF contour maps showing exposures at homes, schools, parks, hospitals, and property lines.
 - Expected future EMF levels under increased electrical demand.
 - Harmonic distortion analyses.
 - Corona discharge assessments.
 - Audible noise studies.
 - Post-construction monitoring reports.
 - How stray voltage resorts will be addressed.

Projected EMF levels should be shared in the very early stages, during public outreach, not just in permit applications. This information should be maintained in publicly accessible online databases.

Key Elements of Project Review

- Local governments should include EMF data as part of project review for transmission lines, substations, and electrical infrastructure serving large data centers. Counties and municipalities should require applicants to provide independent EMF modeling, baseline measurements, projected EMF levels after construction under typical, peak, and future loading conditions, post-construction monitoring, and annual public reporting. This should include EMF levels not only at the edge of the ROW, but also at least 100-1000 feet out so that the public is informed of the exposures in their homes, workplaces, recreation areas and schools.
- Undergrounding should be required unless the applicant can demonstrate why not.

- An explanation of the engineering methods used to minimize EMF, including conductor configuration, phasing, routing alternatives, structure height, and other mitigation measures.
- Fire hazards should be evaluated as a core component of every project. Local governments should require independent wildfire risk assessments, consider cumulative fire risks, and ensure that emergency response capabilities and evacuation planning are incorporated into project approval decisions.
- Project applicants should evaluate potential impacts on livestock health, dairy operations, pollinators, birds, wildlife habitat, fish and aquatic ecosystems.
- Environmental review should also evaluate induced voltage, stray voltage, harmonic distortion, herbicide use within rights-of-way, habitat fragmentation, and cumulative impacts associated with transmission infrastructure.

Recommended Questions Policymakers and the Public Can Ask When a Power Line or Substation Is Proposed Near Your Home or Community

Here are questions community members and local officials can ask.

What are the maximum electric and magnetic fields that any home, school, business, or property line near the power line or substation could experience during peak electrical loading over the lifetime of the project.

Baseline EMF Measurements

- What are the current EMF levels in milligauss at nearby homes, schools, parks, and property lines before construction begins?
- Send the baseline measurements, with details on the date and load details when EMF measurements were taken.

Projected EMF Increases

- What EMF levels are expected after the project is operating? Will there be increases, and if so, by how much? Provide EMF modeling showing field levels at different distances from the project beyond the ROW. Clarify the increase over baseline.
- What are the highest EMF levels expected during peak electrical demand?
- How far from the transmission line, substation, or data center do elevated EMF levels extend? Send numerical calculations.
- What design measures are being used to mitigate EMF exposure for nearby residents, schools, and businesses?
- If future equipment is added or electrical demand increases, how will EMF levels change? Has this been evaluated?
- What setback distance or EMF limit was used to determine that the project is safe for nearby residents?

Post-Construction Monitoring

- Will post-construction EMF measurements be performed, and will the results be publicly available?
- Will there be ongoing EMF monitoring (yearly, monthly, continuous) after the facility is operational, and who will be responsible for that monitoring?

Transparency

- Where can residents access the EMF studies, modeling reports, and measurement data related to the project?
- Will all future EMF measurement reports and monitoring results be made publicly available? If so, where?
- If measured EMF levels exceed projections, what corrective actions will be taken and how will the public be notified?
- If the company concludes that the projected EMF levels present no health risk to humans, livestock, wildlife, including pollinators, what specific scientific evidence and studies support that conclusion?

Safety

- What scientific studies are being relied upon to support claims that the projected EMF levels are safe for nearby residents? List full scientific studies with links.
- Have the projected EMF levels been compared to the 4 mG magnetic field level that has been associated with increased childhood leukemia risk in multiple epidemiological studies?

Agriculture, and Wildlife

- What scientific studies are being relied upon to support claims that the projected EMF levels are safe for livestock and wildlife? List all scientific studies with links.
- Have any studies been conducted evaluating potential impacts on livestock, horses, dairy operations, or agricultural productivity in the vicinity of the project?
- Have any studies been conducted evaluating impacts on pollinators, including honey bees and native bee populations?
- Have any studies been conducted evaluating impacts on birds and avian mortality?
- Are there any studies, reports, or analyses that have found associations between high-voltage transmission line exposure and adverse effects on human health, livestock health, or agricultural productivity? If so, can they be provided to the public?

Sensitive Populations

- Has the project evaluated potential impacts on individuals with pacemakers, implantable cardioverter defibrillators (ICDs), insulin pumps, cochlear implants, or other implanted medical devices?
- Are any setback distances or special precautions recommended for residents with implanted medical devices?

Stray Voltage and Electrical Safety

- At what distances from the proposed transmission line have induced voltages on fences, irrigation systems, buildings, and farm equipment been modeled, and what mitigation measures will be provided?
- If stray voltage is detected after the line is energized, who will be responsible for mitigation and associated costs?
- Will the utility conduct post-construction stray voltage testing on nearby properties, particularly farms and agricultural operations?
- How frequently will the utility monitor for stray voltage after the project becomes operational?
- Will the utility provide the complete results of all stray voltage testing to affected property owners?

Corona discharge: Communities should not only ask how strong these emissions will be, but also how far they will extend from the line. Developers should be required to disclose the expected distance over which corona-related radio interference, audible noise, and other effects may be detectable under both normal and adverse weather conditions.

Induced voltage:

- What are the predicted noise levels (dBA) at the edge of the right-of-way, nearby homes, schools, farms, and parks?
- How far beyond the transmission line are corona-related effects including audible noise, radio interference, ozone generation, and other emissions expected to extend under both normal and adverse weather conditions?
- At what distances from the proposed transmission line have induced voltages on fences, irrigation systems, buildings, pipelines, and farm equipment been modeled, and what mitigation measures will be provided?
- Will post-construction measurements of corona-related emissions, audible noise, radio interference, and induced voltages be conducted to verify the modeling, and will those results be made publicly available?
- If measured levels exceed the projected values or create impacts for nearby residents or agricultural operations, what corrective actions will the utility be required to take?

A list of testimonies by scientific experts documenting the published research on EMF and health filed in previous legal cases on power lines and substations?

1987 Congressional Hearings on the Health Effects of Powerlines, October 6, 1987

- [Transcript of 1987 Congressional Hearing](#)
- Dr. Becker Statement before the House Subcommittee on Water and Power Resources: Congressional Hearings on the Health Effects of Powerlines, October 6, 1987. [\[PDF\]](#)

- [News: Power lines pose possible cancer risk: 1987 Congressional Hearing](#)

Dr. Martin Blank, Columbia University

- [Prepared Testimony of Professor Martin Blank in the Virginia \(SCC PATH 765kV Case PUE 2009-00043\)](#)

“There can be no doubt that the proposed addition of the 765kV line to the existing 500kV line 138 kV lines would add to the level of EMF and thereby create additional potential risk. This would be contrary to the recommendations of the May 1999 NIEHS Report to Congress.”

Robert O. Becker, M.D.

From the website [Robertobecker.net](http://robertobecker.net)

“In 1972 he delivered a paper at an annual convention of the IEEE in which, based on considerations regarding the body’s cybernetic control system, he [warned](#) against “the continuous exposure of the entire North American population to an electromagnetic environment in which is present the possibility of inducing currents or voltages comparable with those now known to exist in biological control systems.” Subsequently he reported experimental studies in which animals were exposed for relatively long times to artificial electromagnetic energy. Employing energy levels comparable to those in the general environment, he found that continuous exposure to the energy for periods of weeks or months caused [altered growth rates](#) in mice, [deficient bone healing](#) in rats, stress-related changes in the [neuroendocrine system](#) in rats, and [chromosome changes](#) in tumor cells. He published explanations of his work and that of others who found similar results, and in several publications discussed the implications of the animal studies with regard to [human health risks](#). In a New York hearing on the safety of high-voltage powerlines, he testified in favor of independent research regarding the health risks of artificial environmental electromagnetic energy, and was [cross-examined](#) for four days. He gave similar [testimony](#) before a congressional committee. Becker was the first to use the term “[electromagnetic pollution](#).”

- Prepared statement for the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs of the House of Representatives concerning health and public policy implications of electric powerlines. March 8, 1990. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Prepared testimony before the State of New York, Public Service Commission in connection with Cases 26529 and 26559—Common Record Hearings on Health and Safety of 765 kV Transmission Lines. November, 1975. [\[PDF\]](#)

More at <https://robertobecker.net>

Testimony of Andrew A. Marino, Ph.D., J.D.

**“POINT 1: The overwhelming weight of the credible scientific evidence shows that the electric field and the magnetic field of the proposed transmission lines will each cause biological effects in the human beings exposed to them.”- [CASE 26529/26559—Common Record Hearings on the Health and Safety of 765 kV Transmission Lines July, 1977](#)
[Amicus Curiae Brief Submitted By ANDREW MARINO](#)**

- In the Matter of: The Application for Certification of Pacific Gas and Electric Company Re: Geysers Unit 16. Docket No. 79-AFC-5. California, August 4, 1980. [\[PDF\]](#)
- A.A. MARINO & R.O. Becker. Med. Res. Eng. 12: 6–9, 1978. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Amicus Curiae Brief on Exceptions, submitted by Andrew A. Marino, Ph.D., J.D., Veterans Administration Hospital Syracuse, New York.
- State of New York, Public Service Commission, Cases 26529 AND 26559—Common Record Hearings on Health and Safety of 765 kV Transmission Lines, February 1978. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Electromagnetic pollution. R.O. Becker & A.A. MARINO. The Sciences, January, 1978, pp. 14, 15, 23. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Amicus Curiae Reply Brief submitted by Andrew A. Marino, Ph.D., J.D., Veterans Administration Hospital Syracuse, New York. State of New York, Public Service Commission, Cases 26529 AND 26559—Common Record Hearings on Health and Safety of 765 kV Transmission Lines, September 1977. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Amicus Curiae Brief submitted by Andrew A. Marino, Ph.D., J.D., Veterans Administration Hospital Syracuse, New York. State of New York, Public Service Commission, Cases 26529 AND 26559—Common Record Hearings on Health and Safety of 765 kV Transmission Lines, July 1977. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Prepared Testimony of Andrew A. Marino, Ph.D., J.D., Veterans Administration Hospital Syracuse, New York. In the Matter of: The Application for Certification of Pacific Gas and Electric Company Re: Geysers Unit 16. Docket No. 79-AFC-5. California, June 17, 1977. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Rebuttal Testimony of Andrew A. Marino, Ph.D., J.D., Veterans Administration Hospital Syracuse, New York. State of New York, Public Service Commission, Cases 26529 AND 26559—Common Record Hearings on Health and Safety of 765 kV Transmission Lines, November 1976. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Prepared Testimony of Andrew A. Marino, Ph.D., J.D., Veterans Administration Hospital Syracuse, New York. State of New York, Public Service Commission, Cases 26529 AND 26559—Common Record Hearings on Health and Safety of 765 kV Transmission Lines, November 1975. [\[PDF\]](#)
- Prepared Testimony of Andrew A. Marino, Ph.D., J.D., Veterans Administration Hospital Syracuse, New York. State of New York, Public Service Commission, Case 26559 – Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation and Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation: Pannell Road to Volney and Oswego to Sterling Transmission Facilities, October 1974. [\[PDF\]](#)

A list of key peer reviewed research reviews and studies

Key Published Scientific Reviews

Brabant C, Honvo G, Demonceau C, Tirelli E, Léonard F, Bruyère O. [Effects of extremely low frequency magnetic fields on animal cancer and DNA damage: a systematic review and meta-analysis](#). Prog Biophys Mol Biol. 2024 Dec 31:S0079-6107(24)00116-0. doi: 10.1016/j.pbiomolbio.2024.12.005.

Sun, J. W., Li, X. R., Gao, H. Y., Yin, J. Y., Qin, Q., Nie, S. F., & Wei, S. (2013). [Electromagnetic field exposure and male breast cancer risk: a meta-analysis of 18 studies](#). Asian Pacific journal of cancer prevention : APJCP, 14(1), 523–528.

Seomun, G., Lee, J., & Park, J. (2021). [Exposure to extremely low-frequency magnetic fields and childhood cancer: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#). PLOS ONE, 16(5), e0251628.

Brabant, C., Geerinck, A., Beaudart, C., Tirelli, E., Geuzaine, C., & Bruyère, O. (2022). [Exposure to magnetic fields and childhood leukemia: A systematic review and meta-analysis of case-control and cohort studies](#). Reviews on Environmental Health.

Carles, C., Esquirol, Y., Turuban, M., Piel, C., Migault, L., Pouchieu, C., Bouvier, G., Fabbro-Peray, P., Lebailly, P., & Baldi, I. (2020). [Residential proximity to power lines and risk of brain tumor in the general population](#). Environmental Research, 185, 109473.

Carpenter, D. O. (2013). [Human disease resulting from exposure to electromagnetic fields](#). Reviews on Environmental Health, 28(4), 159–172.

Carpenter, D. O. (2019). [Extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields and cancer: How source of funding affects results](#). Environmental Research, 178, 108688.

Panagopoulos, D. J., Karabarbounis, A., Yakymenko, I., & Chrousos, G. P. (2021). Human-made electromagnetic fields: Ion forced-oscillation and voltage-gated ion channel dysfunction, oxidative stress and DNA damage (Review). International Journal of Oncology, 59(5), 92. <https://doi.org/10.3892/ijo.2021.5272>

Wang X, Ye Y, Zuo H, Li Y. [Neurobiological effects and mechanisms of magnetic fields: a review from 2000 to 2023](#). BMC Public Health. 2024 Nov 8;24(1):3094. doi: 10.1186/s12889-024-18987-9. PMID: 39516768; PMCID: PMC11545338.

Bandara, P., & Carpenter, D. O. (2018). Planetary electromagnetic pollution: It is time to assess its impact. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 2(12), e512–e514.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(18\)30221-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(18)30221-3)

Sun, J. W., Li, X. R., Gao, H. Y., Yin, J. Y., Qin, Q., Nie, S. F., & Wei, S. (2013). [Electromagnetic field exposure and male breast cancer risk: a meta-analysis of 18 studies](#). *Asian Pacific journal of cancer prevention : APJCP*, 14(1), 523–528.

Tojza, P. M., Redlarski, G., Litzbarski, L. S., & Czaplinski, M. (2026). A Narrative Review on the Influence of Electromagnetic Fields Below 100 kHz on the Endocrine System. *Applied Sciences*, 16(10), 4910. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app16104910>

Heroux, Paul., [Power Systems, Telecommunications, and Diabetes](#) In *The Impact of Anthropogenic Activities on the Natural Environment and Societies during the Contemporary Period*, edited by Carolina Leticia Zilli Vieira. CRC Press, 2026.

Alzheimer's

Sandoval-Diez N, Loizeau N, Huss A, Rösli M, Vienneau D. L

[Long-term residential magnetic field exposure and neurodegenerative disease mortality: An 18-year nationwide cohort study in Switzerland](#). *Environ Int.* 2026 Feb;208:110145. doi: 10.1016/j.envint.2026.110145. Epub 2026 Feb 11. PMID: 41691953.

Huss A, Spoerri A, Egger M, Rösli M; Swiss National Cohort Study. [Residence near power lines and mortality from neurodegenerative diseases: longitudinal study of the Swiss population](#). *Am J Epidemiol.* 2009 Jan 15;169(2):167-75. doi: 10.1093/aje/kwn297. Epub 2008 Nov 5. PMID: 18990717.

Jalilian H, Teshnizi SH, Rösli M, Neghab M. [Occupational exposure to extremely low frequency magnetic fields and risk of Alzheimer disease: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#). *Neurotoxicology.* 2018 Dec;69:242-252. doi: 10.1016/j.neuro.2017.12.005. Epub 2017 Dec 24. PMID: 29278690.

Flora and Fauna

Balmori A. (2021) [Electromagnetic radiation as an emerging driver factor for the decline of insects](#). *Science of the Total Environment.* 767: 144913

Levitt BB, Lai HC and Manville AM II (2022) [Low-level EMF effects on wildlife and plants: What research tells us about an ecosystem approach](#). *Front. Public Health* 10:1000840. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2022.1000840

Levitt, B. B., Lai, H. C., & Manville, A. M. (2021a). [Effects of non-ionizing electromagnetic fields on flora and fauna, part 1. Rising ambient EMF levels in the environment.](#) Reviews on Environmental Health, 37(1), 81–122.

Levitt, B. B., Lai, H. C., & Manville, A. M. (2021b). [Effects of non-ionizing electromagnetic fields on flora and fauna, Part 2 impacts: How species interact with natural and man-made EMF.](#) Reviews on Environmental Health, 37(3), 327–406.

Levitt, B. B., Lai, H. C., & Manville, A. M. (2021c). [Effects of non-ionizing electromagnetic fields on flora and fauna, Part 3. Exposure standards, public policy, laws, and future directions.](#) Reviews on Environmental Health.

Fernie, K. J., & Reynolds, S. J. (2005). [The effects of electromagnetic fields from power lines on avian reproductive biology and physiology: A review.](#) Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health. Part B, Critical Reviews, 8(2), 127–140.

Bees and insects

Thill A, Cammaerts MC, Balmori A. [Biological effects of electromagnetic fields on insects: a systematic review and meta-analysis.](#) Rev Environ Health. 2023 Nov 23

Molina-Montenegro MA, Acuña-Rodríguez IS, Ballesteros GI, Baldelomar M, Torres-Díaz C, Broitman BR, Vázquez DP. (2023) [Electromagnetic fields disrupt the pollination service by honeybees.](#) Sci Adv. May 12;9(19)

Migdał, P., Berbeć, E., Bieńkowski, P., Plotnik, M., Murawska, A., & Latarowski, K. (2022b). [Exposure to Magnetic Fields Changes the Behavioral Pattern in Honeybees \(Apis mellifera L.\) under Laboratory Conditions.](#) Animals: An Open Access Journal from MDPI, 12(7), 855.

Piechowicz B, Sadło S, Woś I, Białek J, Depciuch J, Podbielska M, Szpyrka E, Kozioł K, Piechowicz I, Koziorowska A. [Treating honey bees with an extremely low frequency electromagnetic field and pesticides: Impact on the rate of disappearance of azoxystrobin and λ-cyhalothrin and the structure of some functional groups of the probabilistic molecules.](#) Environ Res. 2020 Nov;190:109989

Shepherd S, Lima MAP, Oliveira EE, Sharkh SM, Jackson CW, Newland PL. [Extremely Low Frequency Electromagnetic Fields impair the Cognitive and Motor Abilities of Honey Bees.](#) Sci Rep. 2018 May 21;8(1):7932.

Shepherd S, Hollands G, Godley VC, Sharkh SM, Jackson CW, Newland PL (2019) [Increased aggression and reduced aversive learning in honey bees exposed to extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields.](#) PLoS ONE 14 (10): e0223614. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.Pone.0223614>

Studies by Kaiser Permanente

Li, D.-K., Chen, H., Ferber, J. R., Hirst, A. K., & Odouli, R. (2020). [Association Between Maternal Exposure to Magnetic Field Nonionizing Radiation During Pregnancy and Risk of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Offspring in a Longitudinal Birth Cohort](#). JAMA Network Open, 3(3), e201417.

Li, D.-K., Chen, H., & Odouli, R. (2011). [Maternal Exposure to Magnetic Fields During Pregnancy in Relation to the Risk of Asthma in Offspring](#). Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 165(10), 945–950.

Li, D.-K., Chen, H., Ferber, J. R., Odouli, R., & Quesenberry, C. (2017). [Exposure to Magnetic Field Non-Ionizing Radiation and the Risk of Miscarriage: A Prospective Cohort Study](#). Scientific Reports, 7(1), 17541.

Li, D.-K., Ferber, J. R., Odouli, R., & Quesenberry, C. P. (2012). [A Prospective Study of In-utero Exposure to Magnetic Fields and the Risk of Childhood Obesity](#). Scientific Reports, 2(1), 540.

Li, D.-K., Odouli, R., Wi, S., Janevic, T., Golditch, I., Bracken, T. D., Senior, R., Rankin, R., & Iriye, R. (2002). [A population-based prospective cohort study of personal exposure to magnetic fields during pregnancy and the risk of miscarriage](#). Epidemiology (Cambridge, Mass.), 13(1), 9–20.

Oxidative Stress

Schuermann, D., & Mevissen, M. (2021). [Manmade Electromagnetic Fields and Oxidative Stress—Biological Effects and Consequences for Health](#). International Journal of Molecular Sciences, 22(7), 3772.

Leković, Ž. (2025). Electromagnetic fields and oxidative stress: The link to the development of cancer, neurological diseases, and behavioral disorders. Electromagnetic Biology and Medicine, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15368378.2025.2567872>

This report is a living document and is updated regularly. [Please get the updated report at this link](#). Contact us with questions and clarifications.