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LEADING EXPERT REFUTES HEALTH CONCERNS FROM SMART METER RADIO FREQUENCY SIGNALS

WASHINGTON (December 20, 2011) — Radio frequency signals from smart electric meters are far weaker and more infrequent than those emitted by common devices including cell phones and microwave ovens, and are safe for electric utility customers when the meters are installed in their homes, a leading U.S. expert in human health risk assessment said today.

“Radio frequency (RF) signals from these meters are well within any science-based standards of safety governing impacts of RF on human health, and as a result, they pose no legitimate health concerns for customers whose homes have smart meters,” said Dr. Peter Valberg, a prominent scientist who has investigated a broad range of environmental impacts on human health for more than 30 years.

Dr. Valberg holds master’s and doctoral degrees in physics from Harvard and was a faculty member and leading researcher at the Harvard School of Public Health. He has provided public health expertise to the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Academy of Sciences, among many others, and he has extensively studied electromagnetic fields from sources like electric utility lines, cellular phones, and radio-TV transmission towers.

His research and scientific conclusions are directly relevant to the introduction of smart electric meters around the nation, which has encountered resistance from a very small but vocal minority of customers who object to the new devices. Smart meters are designed to reduce costs, more effectively manage electricity use, and streamline power restoration in the wake of outages.

Residential smart electric meters can be viewed as ordinary electric or gas meters connected to very low-power radios, Valberg explained. “Their weak signals resemble those of many other ordinary devices we use every day, including not just our cell phones and wireless handsets, but also baby monitors, microwave ovens, laptop computers, and WiFi routers. The

fact that we can receive a multitude of radio and TV stations inside our homes illustrates another common source of RF for everyone.”

In fact, the signals from smart meters are far below those devices and are also far weaker than the levels permitted by the Federal Communications Commission, which sets health standards for radio frequency signals, based on extensive reviews of the biological and health literature. The US standards for radio waves are similar to those of the European Union and those of Health Canada.

Smart meters typically broadcast their signal for a minute each day, usually from outside the customer’s home, so people's potential exposure to radio waves is tiny, Valberg said. The electric panel and wall behind the meter actually block much of that radio signal. Experts calculate that it would take 30 years of living with a smart meter to receive the same radio frequency exposure that a typical cell phone user receives in just one day.

Valberg’s conclusions are widely shared throughout the U.S. scientific community. The California Council on Science and Technology, for example, declared that smart meters comprise “a very small portion of RF signals to which we are exposed...and there is no evidence that additional standards are needed to protect the public from smart meters.”

The Electric Power Research Institute, an independent research arm of the utility industry, also investigated and concluded that “smart meter deployment results in only very weak RF fields inside the residences measured.”

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