

Global Union Against Radiation Deployment from Space

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Contact: Catherine Kleiber, Wisconsin, U.S.A., 920-478-9696

Ed Friedman, Maine, U.S.A., 207-666-3372

info@stopglobalwifi.org

Google's Loony Experiment Approved by FCC

On March 17, 2016, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) gave Google permission to conduct its Project Loon experiments in the U.S., despite evidence it will violate human rights and harm human health and the environment.

Based on details in the application, the experiments may take place at any location and any time or continuously, will pollute public and private environments indoors and outdoors in the U.S. with microwave radiation, and do not include any requirement to notify people in the area who will be exposed to an altered experimental environment.

In ignoring an evidence-packed objection filed by GUARDS to Google, Inc.'s high-altitude balloon-based project, the FCC letter announcing the approval relies on an unsupported assertion by Google, Inc. "Google states that its proposed operations present no meaningful health or environmental risks," says the FCC.

The microwave radiation utilized by wireless technology for communication is part of the radiofrequency (RF) spectrum. Project Loon uses both ground-level and balloon-borne RF-generating equipment designed to encourage proliferation of RF radiation reliant wireless communication systems, particularly in areas formerly without radiation saturation.

Over 200 scientists have signed an Appeal to the United Nations asking for RF limits that are more protective. The Appeal states, "*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 FCC's RF limits are undergoing revision, slowly. Comments were due in 2013 on the FCC's Notice of Inquiry. Hundreds of comments from citizens who are already suffering from the out-of-control proliferation of microwave radiation in our environment asked the FCC to revise its RF limits to be biologically protective as soon as possible.

Wisconsin farmer Dan Kleiber is one of millions harmed by current RF standards, "*None of the common uses of wireless technology comes close to justifying the monetary, physical, emotional, and social price our family has been forced to pay for it. ... I wonder if I will get to see my sons grow to adulthood together or if one or both will have their lives cut short by the lack of meaningful biologically-based safety limits for radiation from wireless devices. They are sweet intelligent wonderful children and do not deserve to suffer or pay the final price so telecom companies can make more money.*"

The FCC's RF limits are based on the premise that if no thermal (heating) damage occurs, there are no biological effects. The 2012 BioInitiative Report, a review by a global group of experts, refutes that premise, finding, "*Public safety standards are 1,000 – 10,000 or more times higher than levels now commonly reported in mobile phone base station studies to cause bioeffects.*"

Section 15 by Prof. Igor Belyaev, Stockholm University, in the 2012 BioInitiative Report states, “*Our analysis suggests that different (bandwidth, frequency, modulation, polarization) NT MW [non-thermal microwave] signals should be considered as separate agents in setting the safety standards. The data also indicate that duration of exposure may be as important as power density (PD) and specific absorption rate (SAR), and, therefore, the ‘dose’ and duration of exposure should also be considered in safety standards along with PD/SAR.*”

Balyaev’s section of the Report cites studies showing bioeffects at very low radiation levels. China and Russia, as well as other formerly Soviet countries, have RF limits that are one hundred times more protective than the FCC’s RF limits. Salzburg, Austria has RF limits that are one million to ten million times more protective.

The U.S. Congress is complicit in the problem. On September 13, 1995, the Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of Air and Radiation, which had drafted population-protective, biologically-based RF exposure regulations, was de-funded by the Senate Appropriations Committee, which wrote, “*The Committee believes EPA should not engage in EMF activities.*” The FCC has no environmental or health expertise, yet the 1996 Telecommunications Act gave the FCC sole responsibility for setting RF safety limits. At the same time, the Act prohibited municipalities from considering human health or the environment when siting cell towers.

The FCC response to GUARDS’ objections noted, “*Issues regarding the risk of harm to life and property from the balloon potentially crashing or interference with airplane operations are outside the regulatory authority of the FCC and should be referred to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as they have authority over those matters.*” This seems to indicate that the FCC, previously described by Harvard Ethics researchers as a “captured [by those they regulate] agency,” has not bothered to consult with the FAA and prefers to ignore this risk approval could impose. Meanwhile, there are instances of airplane pilots becoming ill, most likely from RF exposure in the cockpit, and of essential cockpit instruments malfunctioning due to RF interference. The safety of aircraft, crew, and passengers seems to be of no concern to the FCC.

GUARDS calls for an urgent reassessment of this situation. The Senate Appropriations Committee must allow the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to resume its RF regulatory responsibilities. The FAA must be allowed to put safety first. The FCC should be directed to work with the EPA, the FAA, and other federal agencies tasked with protecting health and the environment before granting unilateral approval of projects with such far-reaching consequences as Google’s Project Loon.

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Resources:

Objection Filed To Google, Inc. License Application at FCC <https://apps.fcc.gov/els/GetAtt.html?id=170563&x=>,
FCC’s Response to GUARDS’ Objection <http://www.stopglobalwifi.org/documents/GUARDSResponseLetterfromFCC.pdf>

Global Union Against Radiation Deployment from Space (GUARDS) www.StopGlobalWiFi.org

EMF Scientists Appeal to the United Nations www.EMFscientist.org

Captured Agency: How the Federal Communications Commission Is Dominated by the Industries It Presumably Regulates http://ethics.harvard.edu/files/center-for-ethics/files/capturedagency_alster.pdf

2012 Bioinitiative Report: www.bioinitiative.org

International RF Limits: <http://www.powerwatch.org.uk/science/intguidance.asp>