



*the health of all Minnesotans*

November 28, 2000

Mr. Roger R. Conant  
Power Line Task Force  
2 Sunfish Lane  
Sunfish Lake, Minnesota 55118

Dear Mr. Conant:

I am writing in response to your letter of October 18, 2000, requesting clarification of the Minnesota Department of Health's (MDH) position with regard to electric and magnetic fields (EMF) issues.

In January 2000, MDH completed an assessment of EMF health effects research (enclosed). MDH conducted this assessment because of public concerns regarding the potential of EMF to cause cancer and other adverse health effects. The assessment included an evaluation of the peer-reviewed literature and the conclusions of scientific committees convened by federal agencies and the US Congress. The MDH assessment concluded, "the current body of evidence does not show that exposures to these fields is a health hazard. Specifically, no conclusive and consistent evidence shows that exposures to residential electric and magnetic fields produce cancer or any other adverse human health effects."

As with many other environmental health issues, the possibility of a health risk from EMF cannot be entirely dismissed. This is due, in part, to the limitations of our current scientific knowledge, which cannot prove with absolute certainty that there is no evidence of harm for many environmental agents. Given that, MDH considers it prudent public health policy to continue to monitor the EMF research and to support prudent avoidance measures, such as providing information to the public regarding EMF sources and exposure. My letter to the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) in September 1999 regarding the Southeast Metro Transmission Line was quite specific to the question before the EQB at that time related to whether or not to order an Environmental Impact Statement.

MDH has provided its assessment to an interagency EMF Workgroup which is evaluating current state policy on EMF and power line infrastructure in Minnesota. This Workgroup consists of representatives from the Department of Commerce, Public Utilities Commission, EQB, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and MDH. The assessment was prepared as part of a larger report being developed by the Workgroup.

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In your letter, you referred to two EMF studies which were published in *Environmental Health Perspectives*. MDH technical staff reviewed these studies, and concluded that they provide limited, if any, support to demonstrate that EMF causes adverse human health effects. The findings of these studies are preliminary and inconsistent, and must be weighed in the context of the extensive body of research that has been conducted on EMF over the last decade.

MDH staff also conducted a review of other EMF research published since the January 2000 assessment. The findings of the EMF research again, were inconsistent, and provided limited support that EMF causes any adverse health effects. As a result, I do stand by this agency's January 2000 assessment as an accurate statement of what we currently know about this issue.

Thank you again for your letter. If you have any questions regarding the assessment, please contact Chuck Stroebel, at 651-215-0919.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan K. Malcolm". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jan K. Malcolm  
Commissioner

Enclosure