



Energy for  
generations

# EMF & YOU

Information about  
Electric & Magnetic  
Fields and the  
electricity network  
in Ireland

April 2017

# ABOUT ESB

ESB was established in 1927, as a corporate body in the Republic of Ireland under the Electricity (Supply) Act of 1927. Since then, ESB has been providing energy for those life moments, big and small, profound and everyday where electricity influences people's lives for the better. As a strong, diversified, vertically integrated utility, ESB operates right across the electricity market: from generation, through transmission and distribution to supply of customers.

ESB is fully committed to protecting the health and safety of employees, contractors, customers and the public. Safety is a core company value of ESB and this value guides the approach to safety across all business activities. Arising from concerns about possible adverse health effects resulting from exposure to electric and magnetic fields (EMF) from electrical equipment, such as power lines and appliances, ESB has set out its policy in relation to this topic in this booklet.

# WELCOME

ESB understands that some people may have concerns about the potential side effects of frequent EMF exposure on health. Over the last 35 years, there has been considerable public debate surrounding EMF and this has generated many questions.

The main interest of people in this country has centred around the fields produced by ESB overhead power transmission lines, but questions have also been asked about the fields produced by other electrical sources such as household electrical appliances, distribution lines and substations. In accordance with our desire to deal in an open manner with this issue we are providing you with information on this subject, covering key questions such as:

- What are EMFs?
- What studies have been carried out so far?
- Are there risks to human health?
- What is the national and international guidance on EMF exposure?
- Do power lines affect animals?
- Should people take any special precautions against EMF?

The quality of your living and working environment, along with the welfare of livestock and farm crops is of the utmost importance to us at all times. All of ESB Networks plant and equipment complies with the European Recommendation (1999/519/EC) on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0Hz to 300 GHz). Despite over 35 years of intensive research into power frequency EMFs, the international overriding scientific consensus is that EMFs, as generated from power lines, do not cause any adverse long term health effects.

We hope you find this booklet useful and informative and that it provides the answers to the questions currently being asked on this issue, which first became an area of Irish public concern in the 1980s. To explain any technical terms used in the following pages, a glossary has been included on page 32. Please contact ESB for more information or visit our website at [www.esb.ie](http://www.esb.ie)



**Pat O'Doherty**, Chief Executive



# WHAT ARE ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELDS?

**Electromagnetic Fields have been recognised since electricity was discovered and have been the subject of thousands of scientific studies across the globe.**

**Our knowledge and understanding of EMF has grown significantly in recent years.**

**Electric and Magnetic Fields occur both naturally and from man-made sources.**

All electricity, both natural and man-made, produces two types of fields: electric fields and magnetic fields. EMF are produced by natural phenomena which have been a constant part of the environment throughout human evolution. For instance, the Earth has a natural electric field and a magnetic field.

**The most common source of man-made EMF that we encounter is electricity.**

The man-made sources include all electrical systems including house wiring, electrical appliances and overhead and underground power lines. In Ireland the voltage in homes is 230V. Electricity in Ireland is transmitted at voltages of up to 400,000V (400kV).

## The Electric Field

The electric field depends on voltage. The higher the voltage, the stronger the electric field. You can imagine it as being like pressure in a water pipe. A 400kV power line produces a higher electric field than a 110kV power line. The magnitude of an electric field is expressed in volts or kilovolts (thousands of volts) per metre. This is written as V/m or kV/m.

Electric fields are strongest closest to a power line and their level reduces quickly with distance. Electric fields are blocked by buildings, trees etc.

Therefore, inside a typical house the dominant sources of electric fields are typical household appliances such as microwave ovens, hair-dryers and electric blankets.

There are no external electric fields associated with underground cables. This is because the electric field produced is contained within the cable.

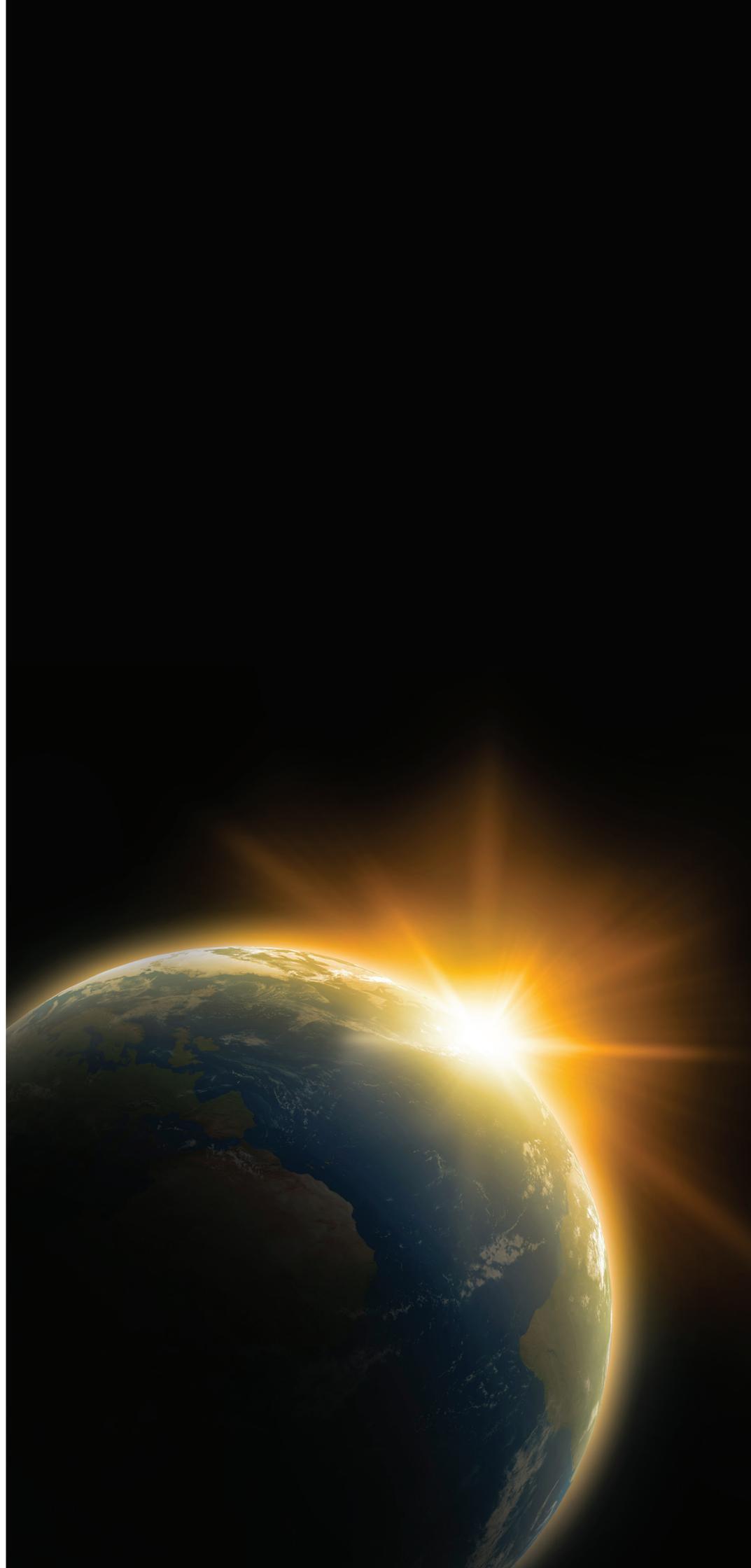
## The Magnetic Field

The magnetic field is produced by moving electric charges and so the strength of the magnetic field varies directly with the current flows in lines or cables. As a result, the magnetic field can vary at different times during the day. You can imagine this as being like the flow rate of water in a water pipe. Magnetic fields are measured in units of microtesla ( $\mu\text{T}$ ). Unlike electric fields, magnetic fields are not blocked by buildings, trees etc. Like electric fields, magnetic fields are highest closest to an electricity line or cable and their level reduces quickly with distance from the line or cable.

Appliances that use a lot of power, such as electric heaters or cookers, generate higher levels of magnetic fields than lower powered appliances.

### Q Why does a fluorescent light glow under a high voltage power line?

There is a well-known phenomenon whereby a fluorescent light will glow dimly if placed below a high-voltage power line. This effect is caused by the electric field. The electric field causes a tiny current (measured in millionths of an ampere) to flow through the mercury vapour inside the tube which casts a weak glow. The moment you move the fluorescent light away from the line, the electric field weakens and the light goes out. This phenomenon has no impact on people or other organisms.



# WHAT IS THE ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM?

Electromagnetic energy travels in waves. These waves span a broad range of frequencies from static frequency (fields that do not change direction with time) at one end of the spectrum, to very high frequency (fields that change billions of times per second) at the other end of the spectrum.

The electromagnetic spectrum shown in Figure A identifies the various types of electromagnetic energy based on their frequency. The earth's magnetic field is largely constant and therefore is described as a static field. Its frequency is very low or zero. The earth's static magnetic field (which acts like a giant bar magnet) causes a compass to align north-south.

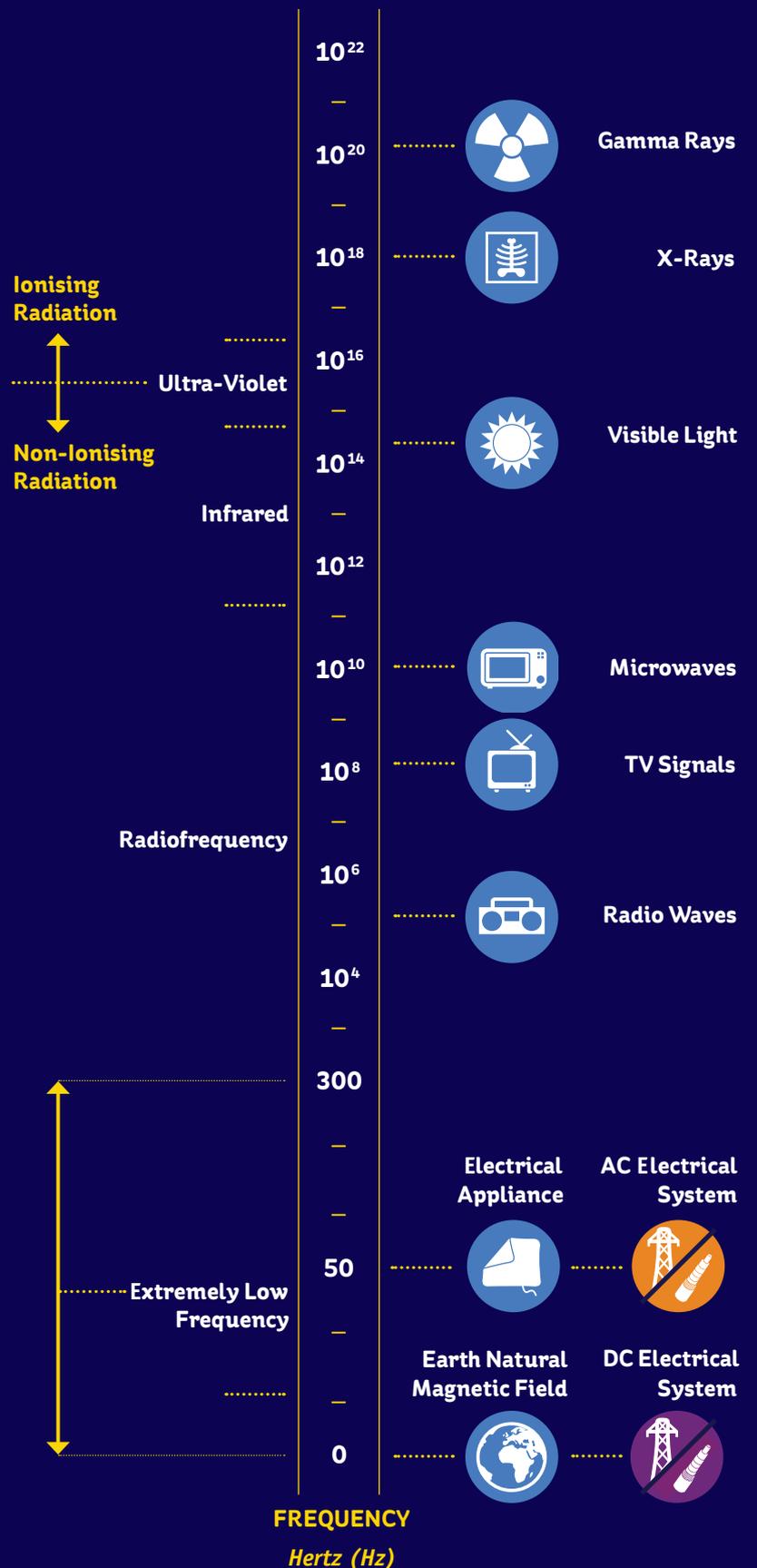
Most man-made sources of electric and magnetic fields fluctuate in direction and intensity. They are called time-varying or alternating current fields (AC). Time-varying or AC fields come from anything that runs on electricity, from electrical installations to household appliances.

Their frequency is expressed in Hertz (Hz). Hertz is the rate at which the field alternates back and forth per second. The electric power system operates at 50Hz in Ireland and Europe and 60Hz in some other places such as North America and thus is a source of EMF at these frequencies. Such frequencies are in the extremely low frequency (ELF) range, 0-300Hz. The ELF EMF from all electrical equipment are time-varying fields with a dominant frequency of 50Hz in Ireland/Europe.

The strength of the EMF or field depends on how close you are to the equipment. Hence the EMF a person can experience from a household appliance can be similar or higher than that from transmission lines because you can be much closer to the household appliance than an overhead transmission line, which is usually several metres or more away from you.

## THE ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM

FIGURE A



# ARE EMFs ASSOCIATED WITH ELECTRICITY THE SAME AS RADIATION?

**No. The fields resulting from electricity are fundamentally different from x-ray and gamma ray radiation.**

Whilst these are all forms of electromagnetic energy there are important fundamental differences.

The term radiation is usually used to refer to ionising energy. Ionising means that, if the radiation is sufficiently strong, it can break bonds in molecules and therefore damage biological molecules including the DNA of cells. Only the high-frequency portion of the electromagnetic spectrum is ionising. This includes, x-rays, gamma rays and ultraviolet light.

The energy in visible light, radio frequency and fields in the static and 50Hz ranges, including electricity, are all classified as non-ionising.

It is very important to realise that 50Hz fields, i.e. electricity, are non-ionising. They have insufficient energy to ionise molecules. Examples of non-ionising energy include EMF from the earth and electric power sources, radio waves and TV waves, microwaves, and most frequencies of visible light. *See figure A, page 9.*

# WHAT SCIENTIFIC STUDIES ON THE HEALTH IMPACT OF EMF HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT?

**Since 1979 many scientific studies have been carried out on the possible effects of EMF on people.**

To determine if something is harmful to health, scientists evaluate the results from three different types of studies.

## 1. Epidemiological Studies

Epidemiology is the study of patterns of disease in populations. It searches for statistical links or associations between exposures, such as EMF, and disease in human populations. Epidemiological studies are usually observational, meaning that researchers investigate, but do not try to change, what happens as people go about their daily lives. As a result, epidemiological studies are susceptible to certain kinds of errors that lead an exposure and a disease to be associated even when one does not cause the other. For example, the positive association between number of doctors per capita and mortality rates arises not because doctors increase mortality, but rather because of social and economic factors such as industrialisation and job opportunities. Likewise, just because persons with a certain health condition live near electric power sources does not mean that the fields from these power sources caused the condition. Other environmental and behavioural causes would have to be ruled out, as would the possibility that some people moved to the area after already developing the health condition.

## 2. Experimental Studies – People and Animals

These studies involve exposing people or animals to EMF in controlled laboratory conditions and looking for biological changes. For practical reasons, human experimental studies of EMF are usually short-term. Experimental studies generally study effects of short-term exposures.

## 3. Experimental Studies – Cells and Tissues

These studies involve exposing isolated tissues and cells to EMF in controlled laboratory conditions to investigate potential mechanisms of interaction.



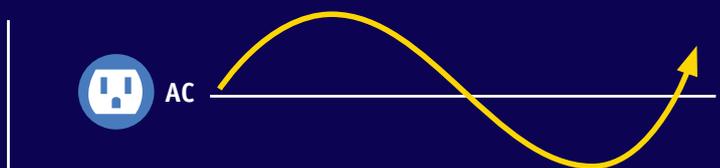
# TWO TYPES OF TECHNOLOGY

Transmission systems worldwide are typically constructed as overhead lines and in some cases underground cables are used.

Two types of technology can be used to transmit electricity. Both AC and DC power lines produce electric and magnetic fields. AC lines produce AC electric and magnetic fields and DC lines produce static electric and magnetic fields. ESB Networks transmission and distribution networks are AC systems.

When electricity transmission cables are placed underground, the metallic shielding of the cables block the electric field from the cables above the ground, but this shielding does not block the magnetic field from the cables.

## ALTERNATING MAGNETIC FIELDS



## STATIC MAGNETIC FIELDS

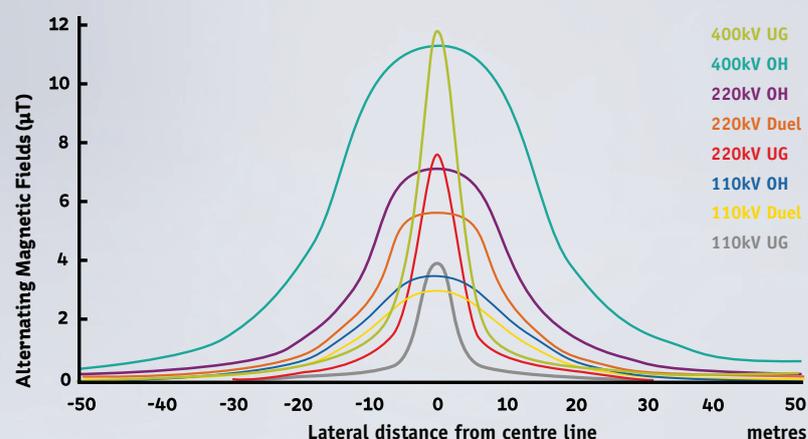


**Figure B.** Schematic comparison of AC and DC current flow and the resulting magnetic fields.

# THE EFFECT OF DISTANCE ON MAGNETIC FIELDS

Both AC and DC technologies produce magnetic fields and both decrease with distance as you move away from the line or cable. See graph below:

## AC LINES AND CABLES



**Figure C** illustrates the magnetic field from overhead AC lines operating in Ireland. The field strength decreases with distance. The fields from these AC lines are far below the 1998 ICNIRP Guidelines for exposure to AC magnetic fields (100µT). In 2010 ICNIRP updated its ELF-EMF guidelines, which included the recommendation for a 200µT reference level for exposure for the general public, but these have not yet been adopted by the European Union.





## WHAT DO HEALTH AND SCIENTIFIC AGENCIES SAY ABOUT RESEARCH ON AC MAGNETIC FIELDS AND HEALTH?

**National and international health and scientific agencies have reviewed more than 35 years of research including thousands of studies.**

None of these agencies has concluded that exposure to ELF-EMF from power lines or other electrical sources is a cause of any long-term adverse effects on human, plant, or animal health.

Agencies have recognised a statistical association between estimated higher long-term exposures to magnetic fields and childhood leukaemia in some epidemiological studies. However they have not been able to rule out the contribution of chance, selection bias and other factors to explain this association with reasonable confidence. Neither long-term studies of animals, nor studies of cellular mechanisms, have confirmed a biological basis for such an association. This explains why no health agency has concluded that there is a causal relationship between magnetic fields and health effects.

SCENIHR is the European Union's Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks. The committee provides opinions on emerging or newly-identified health and environmental risks.

On 4 February 2014, SCENIHR published its "Preliminary opinion on Potential health effects of exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF)". This is an update to its 2009 opinion.

The committee reported that new epidemiology studies do not shed light on a previously reported association with childhood leukaemia. Shortcomings in these studies, and a lack of experimental support from animal studies or cellular evidence prevent a causal interpretation of this statistical association.

Several recent epidemiology studies examined residential proximity to power lines and childhood leukaemia risk, but overall provided no new evidence for an association. In the largest study to date, Bunch et al. (2014) provided an extension and update to the 2005 study in the United Kingdom by Draper et al.

The authors extended the study period by 13 years (1962-2008), included lower voltage lines (132kV) in addition to 275/400kV lines, and included Scotland in addition to England and Wales in their analyses. Bunch et al. (2014) included over 53,000 childhood cancer cases and over 66,000 healthy control children and reported no overall association with residential proximity to 132kV, 275kV, and 400kV power lines for leukaemia or any other cancer among children.

The statistical association with distance that was reported in the earlier Draper et al. (2005) study was not apparent in this extended analysis.

**No health agency has concluded that exposure to EMF from power lines and other electrical sources is a cause of any long-term adverse effects on human, plant, or animal health.**

In 2007, the World Health Organisation updated the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) report with the publication of its comprehensive review of ELF-EMF health research.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusions of the World Health Organisation report can be summarised as follows:

- The research does not establish that exposure to EMF of the nature associated with power lines causes or contributes to any disease or illness.
- There are no substantive health issues related to electric fields at levels generally encountered by members of the public.
- While epidemiology studies have reported a weak statistical association between childhood leukaemia and long-term exposures to magnetic fields greater than 0.3-0.4 $\mu$ T, this association is not supported by the laboratory studies and has not been considered a causal relationship.
- The animal studies as a whole do not show adverse effects, including cancer, among animals exposed to high levels of magnetic fields.
- The laboratory studies on cells and tissues have not confirmed any explanation as to how weak magnetic fields could cause disease.
- Because the epidemiology studies have limitations and the experimental studies provide little or no support for an association with cancer or mechanisms to cause cancer, the World Health Organisation did not conclude that magnetic fields cause childhood leukaemia. Thus, considering all of the research together, the reviewers for the World Health Organisation did not conclude that magnetic fields cause any long-term, adverse health effects.
- The view of the World Health Organisation on ELF-EMF and health issues provided on its website is "based on a recent in-depth review of scientific literature, [we conclude] that current evidence does not confirm the existence of any health consequences from exposure to low level electromagnetic fields".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.who.int/peh-emf/publications/elf\\_ehc/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/peh-emf/publications/elf_ehc/en/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.who.int/peh-emf/about/whatisemf/en/index.html>

**To date, the whole body of scientific research has not confirmed any adverse effect to human health from EMF.**

Independent international health and scientific agencies are continuing to review and monitor the possibility of health effects from exposure to EMF. They are doing this not because they have identified a problem but to ensure that even the smallest possibility of a health risk has not been overlooked, given that everyone in the developed world is exposed to EMF.

The findings of these agencies carry considerable weight, as they reflect the judgements of groups of multiple scientists rather than the views of individuals.

The World Health Organisation stated that the scope of any actions we may take to reduce EMF exposure, either personally or as a society, should be proportional to the strength of the science. The actions to reduce exposure should be very low in cost and should not compromise the health, social and economic benefits of electricity to our society.

## WHAT IS THE VIEW OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT?

In March 2007, Ireland's Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources (DCMNR) assembled a panel of independent scientists to review EMF and radio frequency research. The conclusions are summarised in the document entitled "Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields". The conclusions of this report were consistent with those of The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the World Health Organisation and other national and international agencies. In relation to EMF, the report states:

**'No adverse health effects have been established below the limits suggested by international guidelines.'**

In 1988 and 1992, The Department of Energy (Dr T. McManus) published comprehensive assessments of scientific research on electromagnetic fields. In summary of the views of the national and international organisations who have produced reports and addressed the issue, Dr. McManus concludes 'Without exception these reports and the position taken by the organisations concerned do not see enough evidence to be able to indict electromagnetic fields as a hazard to health'.

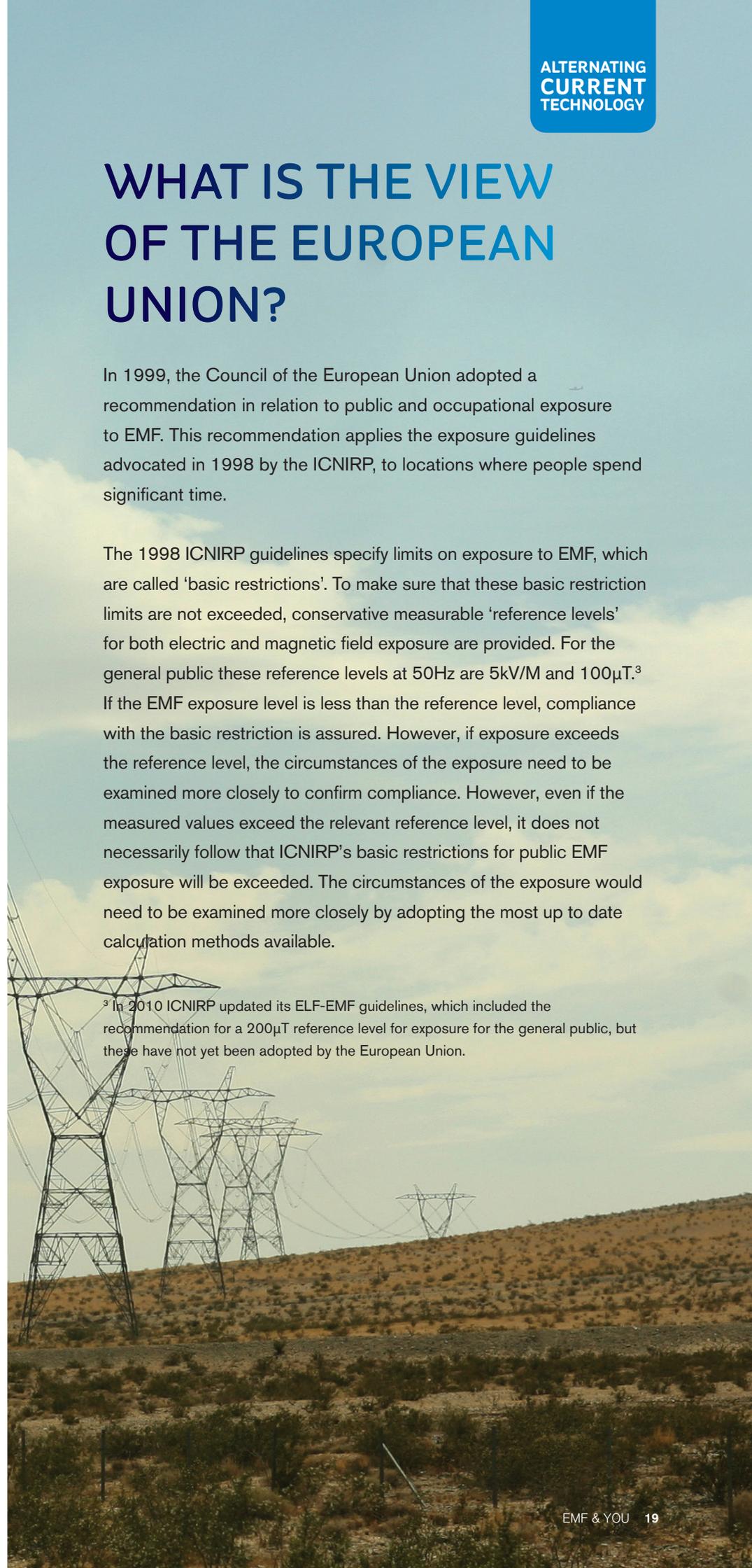
In 2011, Professor Denis O'Sullivan, Chief Scientific Advisor to the Irish Government published an updated review entitled 'A Review of Recent Investigations into the Possible Health Effects of Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) from Power Lines'. In relation to possible long term health effects Professor O'Sullivan concludes that 'the lack of positive findings in controlled experiments or in studies on animals further weakens the belief that this association is in fact, a real one. Furthermore, there is no known biological explanation for the effect. It is simply not possible for the level of energies associated with power lines to cause cancer'.

## WHAT IS THE VIEW OF THE EUROPEAN UNION?

In 1999, the Council of the European Union adopted a recommendation in relation to public and occupational exposure to EMF. This recommendation applies the exposure guidelines advocated in 1998 by the ICNIRP, to locations where people spend significant time.

The 1998 ICNIRP guidelines specify limits on exposure to EMF, which are called 'basic restrictions'. To make sure that these basic restriction limits are not exceeded, conservative measurable 'reference levels' for both electric and magnetic field exposure are provided. For the general public these reference levels at 50Hz are 5kV/M and 100 $\mu$ T.<sup>3</sup> If the EMF exposure level is less than the reference level, compliance with the basic restriction is assured. However, if exposure exceeds the reference level, the circumstances of the exposure need to be examined more closely to confirm compliance. However, even if the measured values exceed the relevant reference level, it does not necessarily follow that ICNIRP's basic restrictions for public EMF exposure will be exceeded. The circumstances of the exposure would need to be examined more closely by adopting the most up to date calculation methods available.

<sup>3</sup> In 2010 ICNIRP updated its ELF-EMF guidelines, which included the recommendation for a 200 $\mu$ T reference level for exposure for the general public, but these have not yet been adopted by the European Union.



## DO POWER LINES AFFECT ANIMALS?

As with human health, some have expressed concern about the potential effects of EMF from high-voltage transmission lines on animal health, welfare, behaviour and productivity.

The potential effects from EMF on both economically important domesticated animal species and wildlife have been investigated since the 1970s. This has led to a good understanding of the potential means by which EMF could affect organisms in the vicinity of power lines. Overall, the research does not show that EMF have adverse effects on the health, behaviour or productivity of animals, including livestock.

The substantial body of research on wild and domestic animals is informative for all large mammals and does not indicate any risk. Thus, there is no scientific basis in the research literature to conclude that the presence of a transmission line would create conditions that would impair the health of animals or would precipitate abnormal behaviour.

Studies on dairy cows, for example, failed to find any consistent variation in fertility, hormone levels, milk fat content or dry matter intake beyond what would be expected due to normal variation even when exposed to ELF-EMF far stronger than would occur from the Irish transmission system. Other research on sheep has examined the effect of ELF-EMF on weight gain, wool production, behaviour, onset of puberty and immune function. None of the studies showed consistent or replicated evidence of adverse effects.

### Crops, Plants and Trees

As scientific literature has accumulated, both from laboratory and field studies, on the potential effect of EMF from transmission lines on plants, including agricultural crops and trees, and forest and woodland vegetation, no adverse effects on plants have been reported from electric and magnetic field exposures at levels comparable to those near high-voltage transmission lines.

## ARE THERE ANY PRECAUTIONS THAT NEED TO BE TAKEN?

A 2007 Government report stated that, while there is limited scientific evidence of an association between ELF-EMF and childhood leukemia, considerable research carried out in laboratories does not support this possibility.

Nevertheless, the report recommended that the evidence should not be discounted and suggested no-cost, or lowcost, precautionary measures to lower people's exposure to ELF fields.

As a precautionary measure, it recommended that future power lines and power installations should be sited away from heavily populated areas. The report also noted that lowering international guideline limits as a precautionary measure is not recommended by the World Health Organisation.

These precautionary goals are achieved by routing transmission lines as far from existing residences as is reasonably possible, optimising the phasing of adjacent lines, and incorporating stakeholder input during the consultation process carried out in the development of new electricity infrastructure.

Source: Report from Expert Group on the Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields for Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, 2007.

# WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON EMFS?

The following sources are recommended should you require more detailed information on EMFs.

- The World Health ORGANISATION – International EMF Project(2007)  
[www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs322/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs322/en/index.html)
- The European Health Risk Assessment Network on Electromagnetic Fields Exposure (2010)  
[http://efhran.polimi.it/docs/EFHRAN\\_D2\\_final.pdf](http://efhran.polimi.it/docs/EFHRAN_D2_final.pdf)
- Health Protection Agency  
[www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/Radiation/UnderstandingRadiation/UnderstandingRadiationTopics/ElectromagneticFields/ElectricAndMagneticFields/HealthEffectsOfElectricAndMagneticFields/](http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/Radiation/UnderstandingRadiation/UnderstandingRadiationTopics/ElectromagneticFields/ElectricAndMagneticFields/HealthEffectsOfElectricAndMagneticFields/)
- Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment  
[www.dccae.gov.ie](http://www.dccae.gov.ie)
- European Commission  
<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/electrical/documents/lvd/electromagnetic-fields/>
- International Agency for Research on Cancer  
[www.iarc.fr/en](http://www.iarc.fr/en)
- International Commission on Non-ionising Radiation Protection  
[www.icnirp.de](http://www.icnirp.de)
- Scientific Committee of the European Commissions  
[http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific\\_committees/consultations/public\\_consultations/scenih\\_r\\_consultation\\_19\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/scientific_committees/consultations/public_consultations/scenih_r_consultation_19_en.htm)

# WHAT IS ESB'S POSITION AND COMMITMENT?

**ESB's position on EMF and health is based on the authoritative conclusions and recommendations of established national and international health and scientific agencies which have reviewed the body of scientific research.**

These agencies have consistently concluded that the research does not indicate that EMF cause any adverse health effects at the levels encountered in our everyday environment and that compliance with the existing ICNIRP standards provides sufficient public health protection.

ESB recognises that some individuals are concerned about issues regarding EMF and health. ESB is committed to addressing these concerns. By continuing to closely monitor engineering and scientific research in this area and provide information to the general public and to ESB staff on this issue.

ESB's policy in relation to this issue is as follows:

- i.** ESB shall apply all legal requirements relating to EMF in Ireland, Northern Ireland, UK and in other jurisdictions where local legislation does not set as high a standard.
- ii.** ESB shall design and operate generation, transmission and distribution networks and telecommunications infrastructure in compliance with legislation and with due regard to the latest recommendations and guidance of leading international experts and independent bodies on EMF.
- iii.** ESB shall closely monitor and support engineering / scientific research on EMF.
- iv.** ESB shall comply with the requirements of 1999/519/EC regarding the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0 Hz to 300 GHz).
- v.** ESB shall provide information for the public on its website about the hazards and risks associated with EMF arising out of ESB equipment and/or premises.

# AC ELECTRIC FIELDS

**Graph 1.** The graphic shows some examples of different sources of electric fields and how they compare to typical electric fields associated with overhead electricity lines that make up part of the electricity grid in Ireland.

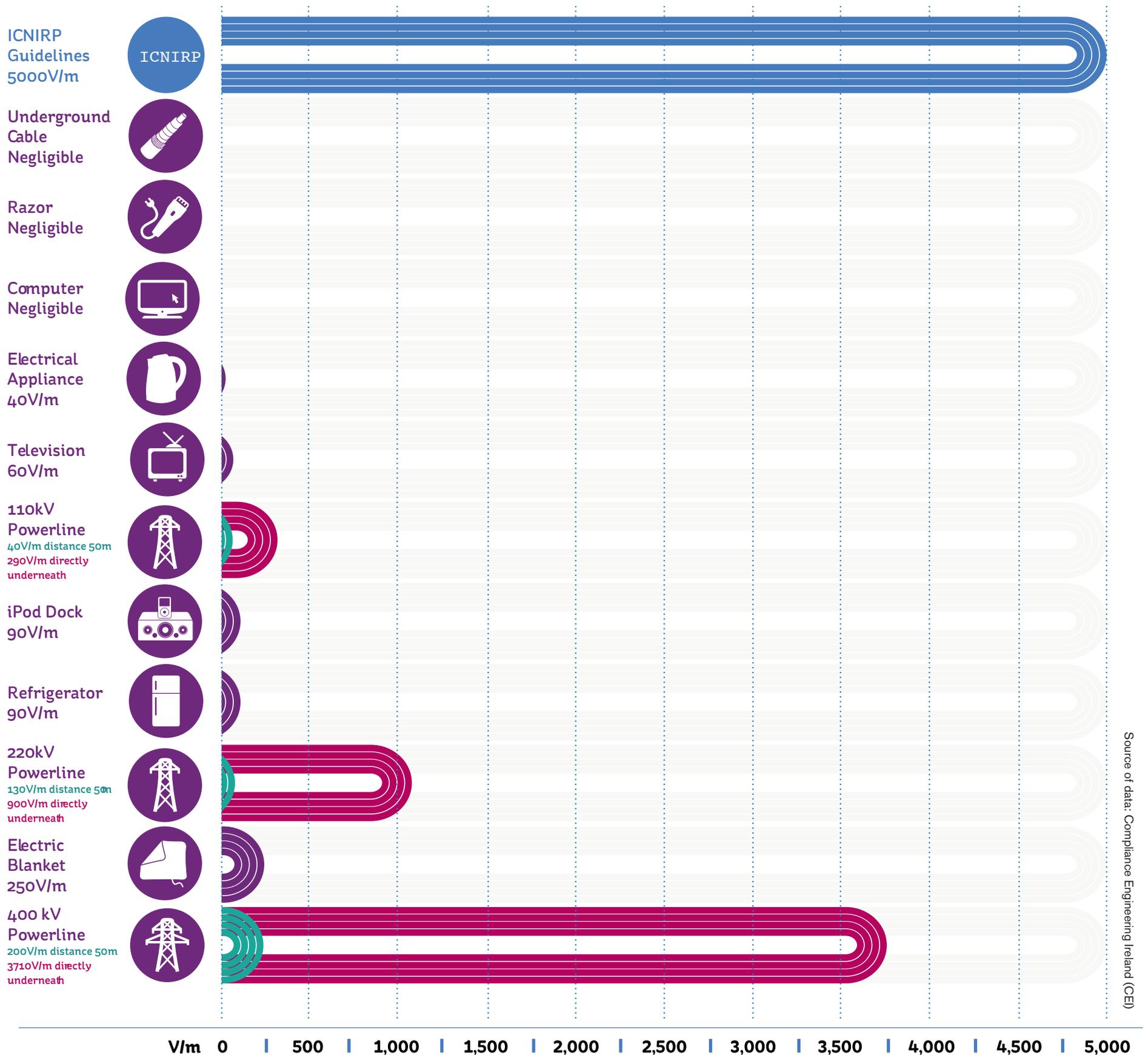
The graph also references the ICNIRP guidelines for exposure to electric fields set to ensure public health and safety.

**The International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) was established in 1992.**

This independent scientific commission was established to advance non-ionising radiation protection for the benefit of people and the environment. It provides science-based guidance and recommendations including independent international guidelines and recommended limits of exposure. ICNIRP is formally recognised by the World Health Organisation and the European Union as the non-governmental standard setting body for EMF.

This provides an indication of approximate fields from lines and appliances.

# COMPARISON OF AC ELECTRIC FIELDS FROM COMMON SOURCES



Source of data: Compliance Engineering Ireland (CEI)

5kV/m is a reference value, 9.2KV/m is maximum allowable electric field as per the ICNIRP recommendations (using the Dimbylow calculations).

# AC MAGNETIC FIELDS

**Graph 2.** The graphic opposite shows some examples of different sources of magnetic fields and how magnetic field levels from these sources compare to typical magnetic field levels from electricity lines or cables that make up part of the electricity grid in Ireland.

The graph also references the ICNIRP guidelines for exposure to magnetic fields set to ensure public health and safety.

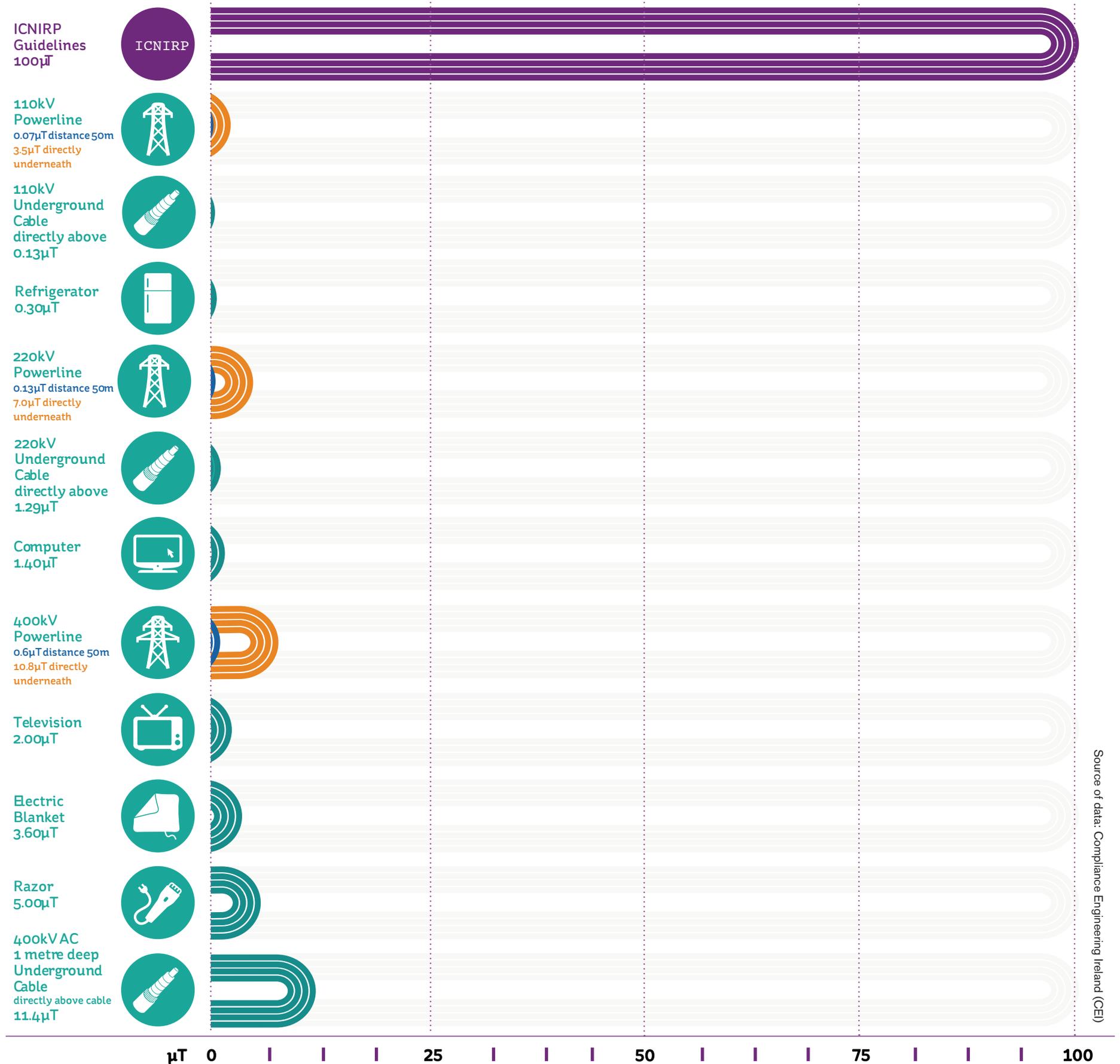


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This graphic provides an indication of approximate fields from lines and appliances.

# COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT SOURCES OF AC MAGNETIC FIELDS ( $\mu\text{T}$ )



Source of data: Compliance Engineering Ireland (CEI)

# GLOSSARY

## AC (ALTERNATING CURRENT)

Electricity that changes direction at regular intervals is described as AC electricity. AC is the form in which electricity is delivered to our homes and businesses. This is the type of electricity used mainly on the Irish transmission system and in every other system in the world.

## CARCINOGENIC

Any substance or agent, including ionising radiation, that causes cancer.

## CONDUCTOR

An object or material that can carry electricity, like the power cables used in an overhead line.

## CURRENT

The movement of an electrical charge similar to the rate of fluid flow in a pipeline.

## DC (DIRECT CURRENT)

Electricity that flows in one direction only, like the battery in your car.

## ELECTRIC FIELD

An electric field is created by the difference in electric potential (voltage) between the conductors in power cables. The strength of an electric field is expressed in units of volts per meter (V/m). Higher voltage sources produce higher electric fields.

## ELECTROMAGNETIC FIELD

The term electromagnetic field is frequently used to refer to electromagnetic energy across a wide frequency spectrum ranging from the earth's natural fields to cosmic radiation.

Sometimes it refers to frequencies above about 100 kHz where electric and magnetic fields are coupled and radiate away from sources.

## ELF (EXTREMELY LOW FREQUENCY)

Frequencies found at the end of the electromagnetic spectrum that contain very little energy and cannot directly break molecules apart, ie., non-ionising. 50Hz electric power operates at ELF levels.

## FREQUENCY

AC Electricity is transmitted in waves. The number of times the wave repeats itself in a second is the frequency and is measured in Hertz. On the Irish transmission system, AC electricity is transmitted at 50Hz.

## INDUCED CURRENT

A flow of electric current in an object created by the proximity to an AC power source.

## IONISING RADIATION

Radiation, such as X-rays, which has sufficient energy to break molecular chemical and electrical bonds.

## MAGNETIC FIELD

Created by the movement of electric charges. Magnetic fields surround magnetic materials and electric currents. In magnetic materials and permanent magnets, the field is created by the coordinated spins of electrons and nuclei within iron atoms. The magnitude of the magnetic field is expressed as magnetic flux density, also referred to as magnetic field strength. Measured in Tesla (for large fields) or  $\mu\text{T}$  (for small fields).

## MOLECULE

The smallest particle of a substance that retains the properties of that substance.

## NON-IONISING RADIATION

Electromagnetic fields at frequencies that do not have enough energy to disrupt atoms or molecules.

## RADIATION

Any of a variety of forms of energy propagated through space.

## VOLTAGE

Voltage is the difference in electric potential between any two conductors of a circuit. It is the electric 'pressure' that exists between two points and is capable of producing the flow of current through an electrical conductor. Voltage in a power line is comparable to pressure on a pipeline.

