

rived. Now it's a much more active organization; I have a great deal of respect for him and his accomplishments."

ROSALYN M. DUPRÉ

APS Says Dangers from EMFs Are Unsubstantiated

The American Physical Society has proclaimed that various studies, when considered as a whole, "show no consistent, significant link between cancer and power line fields." The three-paragraph statement on "Power Line Fields and Public Health" is based on APS's own analysis of the scientific literature and other reviews of possible health effects of low-frequency electromagnetic fields. The announcement, which the APS council approved by a vote of 29 to 1 on 22 April, was noted by national news media such as *The New York Times* and CNN.

Since 1988 APS's Panel on Public Affairs—created to examine ways that "physics can help society"—has been following the debate about effects of low-level 60-hertz electromagnetic fields produced by power lines.

David Hafemeister, a physics professor at California Polytechnic State University, in San Luis Obispo, headed a renewed study within POPA during the past year.

Why make a statement now? According to Robert Park, APS's director of public information, as increasingly sophisticated studies have been completed, the evidence to favor a general thesis that power lines cause cancer has not been found, nor has a credible biophysical process been discovered. However, contrary to POPA's expectation that this knowledge would lessen public concern, anxiety has grown. With no change in sight, APS finally decided, Park said, "If not now, when, and if not us, who?"

Hafemeister hopes the APS statement will counter a concept called "prudent avoidance," which says that electric companies should try to prevent exposure to EMFs because one cannot prove that they do not cause cancer. That argument can sound cautious and reasonable, or it can be seen as a futile attempt to reduce ill-defined (but small) exposure limits to zero—to the tune of \$1 billion per year and growing, according to a 1992 estimate by H. Keith Florig at Resources for the Future in Washington, DC. APS contends that professional organi-

zations should comment "in the interest of making the best use of the finite resources available for environmental research and mitigation."

For an analysis of electromagnetic fields in the environment, see William R. Bennett Jr.'s PHYSICS TODAY article "Cancer and Power Lines" (April 1994, page 23) and letters in response (January 1995, page 13, and March 1995, page 124). A background report by Hafemeister, as well as the complete text of APS's statement, can be found through the APS home page on the World Wide Web, <http://aps.org/>.

DENIS F. CIOFFI

IN BRIEF

In May Japan announced that its 1995 supplementary budget includes 5 billion yen (approximately \$58 million) toward the construction of CERN's Large Hadron Collider (see PHYSICS TODAY, February, page 48). About 70 Japanese scientists now participate in CERN research, but the LHC contribution is expected to increase that number. The action by Japan's Ministry of Education, Science and Culture followed a March mission to that country by a top-level CERN delegation. ■

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