



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

EPA-SAB-Ltr-90-003

May 4, 1990

OFFICE OF
THE ADMINISTRATOR

Honorable William K Reilly
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
401 M Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Mr. Reilly:

Acting upon the recommendation of its Radiation Advisory Committee, the Science Advisory Board urges you to make provisions for an early resumption of the Agency's research and related activities needed to make decisions about the issuance of guidelines for exposure to nonionizing electromagnetic fields.

The Science Advisory Board has made strong recommendations to this effect several times before, going back to the Agency's 1983-84 report which reviewed research in this area by its own and other laboratories. In 1984, the Science Advisory Board found, "that the report is an adequate review of the scientific literature and can serve as the basis for the development of radiation protection guidance for use by Federal agencies to limit exposure of the general public to radiofrequency radiation." However, the guidance development effort (and the Agency's own research) was subsequently terminated despite objections from other Federal agencies, industry, the academic community, and the Agency's own Science Advisory Board.

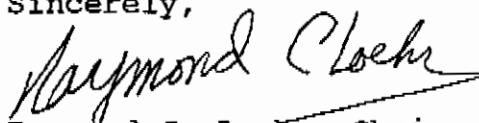
It is the Board's present view that its earlier recommendations have lost none of their force. In addition, new circumstances have arisen that further support these recommendations. Recent research has focused attention on nonionizing electric and magnetic fields well below the usual radiofrequency range, down to 60-Hz power line and lower frequencies, as well as radiofrequency fields modulated at these extremely low frequencies (ELF). Reports in recent issues of scientific journals have suggested the possibility that ELF and power frequency fields may produce detrimental health effects. Some of these studies suggest that cancer is associated with exposure to alternating current magnetic fields. The Agency's Human Health Assessment Group is expected to draw attention to this possibility in its forthcoming report.

All these circumstances reinforce our view that the Agency should resume its efforts in this area. It is entirely appropriate for EPA actively to conduct research on nonionizing radiation, including ELF effects. Even though the Department of Energy and the National Cancer Institute conduct research on ELF effects, EPA will be called upon to address the public health and environmental issues involved. The fact that other agencies, state and local authorities, and foreign governments have looked to EPA for assistance on this issue reinforces the need for EPA actively undertake this ELF research.

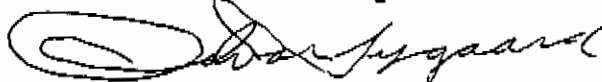
The Board affirms its interest in this subject, continues to follow the progress of science on non-ionizing electromagnetic fields and to conduct reviews for the Agency. There is enough substance to the science in this area to require your attention.

The Science Advisory Board continues to urge the Agency to undertake a leadership role in this complex and important area.

Sincerely,



Raymond C. Loehr, Chairman
Executive Committee
Science Advisory Board



Oddvar F. Nygaard, Chairman
Radiation Advisory Committee
Science Advisory Board

cc: Mr. R. Guimond
Dr. W. Farland