

## **ELECTRO-MAGNETIC FIELDS**

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 6, 1994

*Reviewed by Board of Managers April 2005*

- WHEREAS,** The third Object of the National PTA states: To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth; and
- WHEREAS,** There is great public concern based on recent studies that electro-magnetic fields (EMF) may cause or promote certain cancers; and
- WHEREAS,** In response to the 1992 Swedish national study indicating an increase in childhood leukemia with exposure to EMFs, the Swedish government announced that it would act on the assumption that there is a connection between exposure to power frequency fields and cancer, and, would propose legislation limiting EMF exposure to 1 milliGauss (mG) or less; and
- WHEREAS,** Children are exposed to sources of EMFs other than power lines, such as school computers, microwave ovens, televisions, and all electrical equipment; and
- WHEREAS,** Legitimate and proven methods of mitigating EMFs from power lines, computers, and other sources are available; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA seek participation in coalitions to study the effects of electro-magnetic fields; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA educate and inform its districts, councils and units about the potential hazards of EMFs and encourage school districts and schools to develop risk reduction policies and continue to disseminate information on the subject as it becomes available.

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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

There is growing concern about the effects of electro-magnetic fields (EMFs). A large body of evidence indicates a connection between exposure to EMFs and cancer. Some studies (for example, a study paid for by Southern California Edison) have not found a connection, but, more importantly, no study has concluded that EMFs do not cause or promote cancer.

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Many experts in the field including Carl Blackman, a biophysicist with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and David Carpenter, Dean of the State University of the New York School of Public Health advocate “prudent avoidance.” In other words, avoid EMF exposure whenever possible.

The problem is that most people do not understand where EMFs come from, let alone how to avoid exposure to EMFs. Most people assume that EMFs are generated only from high voltage transmission lines. In fact, EMFs are generated from many sources, including all electrical appliances (e.g., computers, hair dryers, electric blankets) and high levels of EMFs can be found in any home or school simply due to the way the building is wired.

Most public utilities offer free measurement services. All homes and schools should be measured as a matter of course. Where levels are unacceptably high, public utilities should be encouraged to mitigate the problem. The public also should be educated about the fact that legitimate methods and devices for mitigation exist and that the California Department of Health has a list of mitigation experts.

Computers are a major source of EMF exposure in schools. However, even old computers can be cheaply and easily retrofitted to reduce exposure. Sweden, which has taken the lead in the study of EMFs, has issued guidelines on computers and EMF exposure which should be followed until we have all the facts. The New York City Schools instituted such guidelines early in 1992.

Lessons learned from studies on smoking, asbestos, second-hand smoke and radon must not be ignored. We have an obligation to learn from the past and protect our children by reducing their exposure to what is clearly a serious and potential health hazard.