



STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP ON ELF EMFS (SAGE)

Record of the

DWG INFORMATION TASK GROUP MEETING

23 March 2009

MOA, Russell Square, London WC1

DISTRIBUTION:

Copies to - Meeting Participants and SAGE Website
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March 2009

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Note: Nothing in this report should be taken as representing a collective SAGE view. The views recorded are for the most part those expressed by individual participants and even were the report indicates that an agreement has been reached, this has the status only of a working agreement for this particular meeting or workstream and should not be read or quoted as a SAGE view.

Introduction

This report is the record of the SAGE Distribution Working Group Information Task Group (DWG ITG) held on Monday 23 March at the offices of the Mobile Operators Association, Russell Square, London WC1.

The DWG ITG was set up by the SAGE Distribution Working Group at its meeting of 29 January 2009 to collate introductory information for the DWG, to agree how to present this in a DWG meeting and to assist the facilitators in devising an initial DWG programme of work.

Attendees

Andy Hood (Western Power Distribution – part of Energy Network Association),
Paul Bicheno (IET), Peter Roberts (Energy Networks Association)

Apologies: John Swanson, Alasdair Philips

Facilitators: Nigel Westaway (Lead Facilitator), Pete Wilkinson (Consultant to Golder Associates)

Agenda

The following agenda was agreed:

10.30am Introductions
Reflections on 29 January DWG meeting & meeting report
Other updates
Introductory documents
Circulation and presentation of documents
BREAK
Work programme
Additional DWG agenda items
Actions
1.00pm CLOSE

Recording

It was agreed that the meeting report would record only broad currents of discussion, any agreements arrived at, and any outstanding issues. It is not a verbatim report of the meeting.

Reflections on 29th January

It was noted that some of the points recorded in the report of the 29 January DWG meeting were purely anecdotal but some were more general statements and could therefore be open to challenge. As there was no disclaimer to the contrary, it might be possible to infer that these were 'official' SAGE statements. **It was agreed** that, in addition to a strongly worded caveat in reports, other clarifications might be required to ensure that individual statements were interpreted as such. **It was also agreed** that both the full and summary reports should be sent to all attendees and posted on the website.

Other Updates

The appropriate departments of government have set a date for a meeting to finalise the government's response to SAGE Phase I. It will be in April and the date will be made known to the group by Peter Roberts. However, it was stressed that the precise date of the meeting was not expected to be widely advertised.

Introductory Documents: Collation, Circulation and Presentation

The SAGE DWG Scoping Paper, prepared by John Swanson and Alasdair Philips and presented at 29 January DWG meeting, was briefly revisited. The facilitator reminded the group that the DWG had broadly agreed to the approach which this proposed to the initial stages of the DWG's work, including the separation of sub-stations and distribution wiring.

The group were happy to work on this basis and also **agreed** to the circulation of the papers recommended by JS, and to those from AP when available. **Action NW**

It was agreed that a beginners' introductory presentation on to the issue was also required (e.g. what is a sub-station - what it does and how it does it; how does distribution wiring work?) **Action AH and PR** agreed to check if there is any 'off the shelf' basic material which could meet this need. **AH** agreed to give a mini-presentation of the basics (e.g. single phase & multi-phase) to the next DWG meeting. **PB** undertook to provide maps to demonstrate distribution issues and **PR** agreed to provide additional teaching materials.

NW will ensure material is collated and distributed to members and make recommendations on how the remainder of the agenda issues for the next DWG meeting (see below) could be adequately covered. (For example, **JS & AP** might wish to present summaries of the papers they have recommended.)

It was estimated that 1 hour would be required for the introductory presentations (30 minutes for the presenters and 20+ minutes for Q and A.) PowerPoint facilities would be required. **Action facilitators.**

In addition, DWG members should be encouraged to read the First Interim Assessment Report from SAGE Phase 1 to bring themselves up to speed for the next meeting. **Action NW.**

Work Programme

It was proposed that the work programme could be broken down into four discreet sections:

- What are electromagnetic fields? Where are they? How strong are they?
- What are the options for mitigation?
- What are the practical implications of implementing these options?
- What health benefits might accrue from such mitigation?

It was also proposed that the DWG might work towards the development and analysis of three levels of mitigation which could include:

- Highly cost-effective measures (i.e. low-cost interventions resulting in large reductions in exposure);
- Moderately cost-effective measures (i.e. more costly interventions and/or with lower reductions in exposure); and
- Least cost-effective measures (i.e. high cost interventions with relatively low reductions in exposure).

The detailed implications of each of these levels could be set out to create a flexible form of cost/benefit analysis, offering to government a range of policy measures to choose from. There may, for example, be some obvious low cost/high gain measures that could be introduced in the short term, whilst allowing further research to determine the value of implementing the higher cost options.

It was suggested that the same exposure levels which were used for Phase 1 should be adopted for Phase II, based on the (including the WHO/California distinction) but it was acknowledged that there are varying views as to the validity of the .4 microtesla threshold.

Facilitator's note: The question of whether to work with the .4 microtesla threshold is a key content issue that will need to be discussed in the DWG itself and, quite possibly, by SAGE as a whole.

Information Needs

It was agreed that an early task for the DWG would be to review the available information, identify any information gaps and agree how to make these good. (For example, there is insufficient readings data to give a clear overall picture of exposures or of the proportions attributable to overheads, wiring and substations.) In

addition, information would be required in respect of the main forms of mitigation, the feasibility and value of retro-fitting, new designs for sub-station construction etc.

Information needs for the future needed to be identified relatively quickly in order to allow sufficient preparation time, but some were already evident. For example it is known that certain kinds of cabling and services can cause elevated levels of EMFs in the home, but it is not known in how many homes are affected, which would make it difficult to assess the costs and benefits of mitigation options. Similarly, it is generally recognised that sub-stations have little impact unless within a certain distance of dwellings – but it is not known how many homes fall within this range. Data collection must be objective. Good data does exist but from only, perhaps, 50 sites. A national picture needs to be assembled in relation to sub-stations and overhead distribution cabling.

Mitigation

It was agreed that mitigation measures could be introduced at the next DWG meeting. Given the complexity and the potentially controversial nature of the issue, this could be no more than a brief first pass, with an intention to return to it later.

Some felt that any mitigation measures proposed must be professionally robust and backed up by evidence to justify their cost, and that it would be difficult to recommend mitigation measures which had only marginal benefits.

Agenda for April DWG Meeting

It was agreed that the agenda for the April DWG meeting should include the following main elements:

- Introduction to electricity and distribution systems;
- Presentations on other introductory papers;
- Summary of available information;
- Identification of information gaps and how to fill them;
- A first look at mitigation processes; and
- Discussion of the future programme.

Future Meetings

It was agreed that, depending on the outcome of discussions in April, there would probably be further DWG meetings in June and September.

The meeting ended at 1pm.