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## Cellphone industry attacks San Francisco's ruling on radiation

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San Francisco, a city that banned the plastic bag, now has waded into the muddy territory of cellphone radiation, setting off a call to arms in the \$153 billion wireless industry.

Last week, the Board of Supervisors passed a law -- the first in the nation -- requiring retailers to inform their customers how much radiation the cellphones on their shelves emit, so shoppers can figure out how close the devices come to the upper limits on radiation set by the Federal Communications Commission.

The law, which goes into effect early next year, didn't mention the word, but it was all about one thing: cancer, and whether cellphones cause it.

The cellphone industry answered with its own C-word -- cancel. After the vote, the CTIA wireless trade group called off its fall show, scheduled for San Francisco. Elsewhere in the country, the industry has been more successful. Earlier this year, similar laws in Maine and California were beaten back by the makers of the iPhone and Droid and the telecom giants that carry those phones on their networks.

"San Francisco has gotten out front on a number of issues historically," said John Walls, a CTIA spokesman, "but in this case, we are concerned they are leading the pack down a wrong and misleading road."

Lacking conclusive evidence one way or the other, studies relating to cellphone safety are being hurled about frenetically as cellphones grow ever more powerful and pervasive: Americans have more than 285 million mobile phones at their ears, and the number in use globally reaches 4.5 billion.

In 2006, Lennart Hardell, a professor of oncology and cancer epidemiology at the University Hospital in Orebro, Sweden, reported that adults he followed who had used cellphones for more than 10 years "give a consistent pattern of increased risk for acoustic neuroma and glioma," forms of brain tumors. That study has been used as the basis for public health alerts by way of commercials, billboards and warning labels in nations including Britain, Israel, Finland and France, but it has had little resonance in the United States.

Hardell published a report last year that said teens and children have a fourfold increased chance of getting brain cancer.

The National Toxicology Program (NTP), part of the National Institutes of Health, is about to begin a \$20 million study using rodents to test the effects of cellphone radiation. But a study on animals has its

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limitations, and it won't tackle questions about the effects on children, said Ronald Herberman, former director of the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute.

"I believe we have ample evidence for questioning the long-term impacts of cellphones on health and solid grounds for concerns about the long-term implications of their use," he said.

The last major study done by the U.S. cellphone industry was published in 2002. Citing privacy concerns, corporations have declined to release records of heavy cellphone use to match against incidence of brain tumors.

The issue of children and cellphones has not been widely studied, even as three out of four teenagers use a cellphone.

In a Senate subcommittee hearing in September, a member of the NTP said there is potentially a greater risk that children, with their thinner skulls, would suffer from the absorption of radio frequencies in their brain tissue. But when asked by Sen. Arlen Specter (D-Pa.) whether he would recommend limits for children, NTP Associate Director John Boucher said, "I don't think we are in a position yet to make that recommendation."

### **Studies prompt concern**

A cellphone call is carried over the same kind of radio frequencies as those that funnel the evening news and "Dancing With the Stars" into living-room televisions. For a call to be placed, radio frequencies move at lower powers between a device and a cell tower. Since the 1980s, scientists have questioned how those microwaves affect the body.

"A large number of studies have been performed over the last two decades to assess whether mobile phones pose a potential health risk," the World Health Organization states on its Web site. "To date, no adverse health effects have been established for mobile phone use."

The Food and Drug Administration and the FCC, the agencies that oversee cellphone use and health, say users who want to reduce exposure to radio-frequency energy should limit conversations and use hands-free devices, which place more distance between a phone and the head.

Last month, 13 nations in Europe and Asia released the results of a decade-long study on long-term use. Scientists debated the results, saying the study was flawed because it relied too much on the subjects' memories of how much they used their phones.

The report, funded largely by the biggest global cellphone trade group, said that there was no conclusive link between cellphone use and cancer but that there were "suggestions" that heavy use could increase the risk of glioma. NIH issued a statement after the report's release, emphasizing that the study showed no link.

But some experts said even the suggestion of a link warrants concern.

"When you have suggestive evidence, you don't wait until you have everything conclusive before you start warning about it," said David Carpenter, a University of Albany public health physician and professor. "That is the essence of cautionary principle."

### **Warning efforts opposed**

U.S. standards mandate that the amount of energy seeping into the body, known as the specific absorption rate, can range from 0.2 watts per kilogram of body tissue to 1.6 watts.

Some companies offer guidelines of their own. The Nokia 1100, for instance, warns that the phone meets radio-frequency guidelines only when it is held at least 1.5 centimeters from the body. Motorola recommends keeping the antenna of a device at least 2.5 centimeters (1 inch) from the body. BlackBerry warns that one of its devices "SHOULD NOT be worn or carried on the body" without a BlackBerry-approved belt clip.

But attempts to require warnings or explanations have sparked strong opposition.

Earlier this month, state Sen. Mark Leno, a San Francisco area Democrat, introduced a California bill he said would simply highlight the information some cellphone companies already note in user manuals. AT&T, a perennial supporter, stopped contributing campaign funds. The company declined a request for an interview.

"My bill was not about warnings or a call to reduce cellphone use; it was about education and letting people decide on their own from information provided," Leno said. It failed.

Earlier this year, a Maine bill proposed labels on cellphones warning of potential health risks for young users.

The CTIA, the high-tech industry group TechAmerica and the Maine Merchants Association hired local lobbyists to convince legislators that a proposed warning label showing an X-ray image of radiation penetrating a child's brain was fear-mongering. They were joined by [Apple](#), Verizon and AT&T, according to state lobbying disclosure records.

Dane Snowden, a vice president for the CTIA and former FCC head of consumer protection, said at a hearing in Maine that federal standards protect users.

"As you can see, this isn't the wireless industry's opinion. . . . it's science," Snowden said.

The bill failed, and Andrea Boland, who introduced it, didn't understand all the fuss.

"It's very unpopular to bring up this subject because cellphones are so celebrated -- seen as glamorous, fun and important for safety," Boland said. "But I'm left asking, why are people so resistant to this? It's a precaution only. No one is saying, 'Don't use your cellphone.' "

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