

Government of India
Ministry of Environment and Forests
(Wildlife Division)

Paryavaran Bhawan
CGO Complex, Lodhi Road
New Delhi-110003

F. No. 15-11/2010/WL-I

Date: 9th August 2012

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Sub: Advisory on the use of Mobile Towers to minimize their impact on Wildlife including Birds and Bees- conveyed.

In pursuance to the report submitted by the Expert Committee constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests to study the possible impacts of communication towers on wildlife including birds and bees and subsequent consultations held with the stakeholders, an advisory containing the actions to be undertaken by various agencies involved in providing, regulating and dealing in any other manner with the EMR based services has been prepared by the Ministry with the objective to avoid and mitigate the impacts of EMR on such species.

A copy of the aforesaid advisory is enclosed for information, record and requisite action on the part of concerned stakeholders.


(Vivek Saxena)

Deputy Inspector General (WL)

Encl: As above.

Distribution:

1. The Chief Secretary, all State/U.T Governments.
2. The Environment Secretary and Forests Secretary, all State/U.T Governments.
3. Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.
4. The Planning Commission, Government of India.
5. Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India.
6. Chairman and all members of the 'Expert committee to Study the possible impacts of communication towers on wildlife including Birds and Bees'.

Copy to:

1. PPS to Additional Secretary (MM), MoEF
2. PPS to ADG (WL), MoEF
3. PA to IGF (WL), MoEF
4. PPS to Addl. Director (CP), MoEF
5. The Member Secretary, Central Pollution Control Board.
6. The Director, Wildlife Institute of India

Advisory on use of Mobile Towers in a way to minimize their impacts on Wildlife including Birds and Bees

An 'Expert committee to Study the possible Impacts of Communication Towers on Wildlife including Birds and Bees' was constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India on 30th August 2010. The report of the expert committee has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The review of the available scientific information by the Expert Committee in the report indicates that the Electro-Magnetic Radiations (EMR) interfere with the biological systems. On the basis of the report of the Expert Committee and subsequent deliberations with the stakeholders, a list of actions to be undertaken by various agencies involved in providing, regulating, and dealing in any other manner with, the EMR based services, has been prepared. Main objective of the listed actions is to avoid and mitigate the impacts of EMR. The Ministry of Environment and Forests accordingly requests the concerned Departments, State Governments, user agencies, and the public at large to take following actions:

I. Ministry of Environment and Forests:

1. The Electro Magnetic Radiations from the communication towers may have varying negative impacts on wildlife especially birds and bees. Accordingly, the information on the impacts related to different forms of wildlife as well as humans, should be provided to the concerned agencies for regulating the norms for notification of standards for safe limits of EMR taking into consideration the impacts on living beings.

II. State/Local Bodies:

1. Regular auditing and monitoring of EMR should be conducted in urban localities/ educational/hospital/industrial/residential/recreational premises and especially around the Protected Areas (PAs) and ecologically sensitive areas w.r.t. notified norms of Department of Telecommunications. Problematic towers from EMR point of view should be got suitably relocated/removed.
2. Bold signs and messages on the dangers of cell phone towers and associated radiations are displayed in and around the structures of the towers. In addition to these signs, use of visual daytime markers in areas of high diurnal raptor or waterfowl movements, should also be promoted.
3. Before according permission for construction of towers, ecological impact assessment and review of installation sites will be essential in wildlife and/or ecologically important areas. The Forest Department should be consulted before installation of cell phone towers in and around PAs and zoos.

III. State Environment and Forest Departments:

1. Regular awareness drive with high level of visibility through all forms of media, and in regional languages should be undertaken by the State Governments and concerned

Departments to make people aware about various norms and standards with regard to cell phone towers and dangers of EMR from the same. Such notices should also be placed in all wildlife protected areas and zoos by the Forest Department.

IV. Department of Telecommunications:

1. To prevent overlapping of high radiation fields, new towers should not be permitted within a radius of one kilometre of the existing towers. Sharing of passive infrastructure if made mandatory for Telecom Service Providers can minimize need of having additional towers. If new towers must be built, these should be constructed with utmost care and precautions so as not to obstruct flight path of birds, and also not to increase the combined radiations from all towers in the area.
2. The location and frequencies of cell phone towers and other towers emitting EMR, should be made available in public domain. This can be at city/ district/ village level. Location-wise GIS mapping of all cell phone towers should be maintained which would, *inter alia*, help in monitoring the population of birds and bees in and around the mobile towers and also in and/or around wildlife protected areas.
3. There is an urgent need to refine the Indian standard on safe limits of exposure to EMR, keeping in view the available literature on impacts on various life forms. Till such time the Indian standards are reformed, a precautionary approach shall be preferred to minimize the exposure levels and adopt stricter norms possible, without compromising on optimum performance of the networks.

V. All concerned agencies:

1. Security lighting for on-ground facilities should be minimized, and as far as possible, point downwards or be down-shielded to avoid bird hits.
2. Any study conducted on impact of EMF radiation on wildlife needs to be shared with Forest Department and Department of Telecommunications to facilitate appropriate policy formulations.
