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The Green Issue

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Are “Smart Cities” Green Cities?

BY JEROMY JOHNSON



City planners across the country are beginning to implement the so-called “smart city.” The city of the not-to-distant future will include 5G wireless antennas on most utility poles, “Internet of things” sensors attached to everything, and self-driving vehicles whisking us from place to place.

We are told that the wireless smart city will bring us into a sustainable future of ease and convenience. However, cracks are appearing in this utopian vision. At the very time that the smart city is being rolled out, our best science now shows how detrimental wireless technology can be to our health. Can this new development really be considered “green” if it is ultimately harmful to our health?

What Is 5G?

5G refers to “5th generation” wireless technology. Our devices currently run on 3G and 4G

technology, which use a limited range of the microwave spectrum. 5G will greatly expand the amount of spectrum used and will include high frequencies that have never been used before in consumer devices. These high frequencies, between 14 GHz and 73 GHz, do not travel as far or penetrate building as easily. However, they will allow for much greater download speeds. This will enable 5G devices to download a movie in a few seconds and will allow companies like AT&T to deliver cable programming wirelessly, rather than via a cable.

The biggest issue with 5G is that wireless antennas will be placed on most light and util-

ity poles within our neighborhoods. It is estimated that the 5G network will require each of the four major wireless carriers to install one million new antennas. This will exponentially increase the amount of microwave radiation in our communities, creating an electromagnetic environment unlike anything humans have ever encountered.

“Internet of Things”

The lower frequencies in the 5G spectrum will allow wireless companies to reach any “smart” device that can be connected to the Internet. This will potentially allow cities to better control infrastructure, which can benefit society. However, this technology will also come into our homes. Wireless toothbrushes, coffee-makers, toasters, thermostats, and security systems are what make up the smart home. Corporations tout potential environmental

benefits and the convenience of running every aspect of your home from a smartphone. However, can any convenience really be worth the health impact of flooding your home with microwave radiation?

Self-Driving Vehicles

The self-driving car is a major component of the smart city. The promise of autonomous cars is that people will be chauffeured by artificial intelligence on wheels while they sit back and watch 5G videos. This technology may also reduce accidents, but there is a major downside for society. Self-driving cars require several types of wireless technology to operate. They include Lidar, radar, DSRC, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, infrared, and 4G/5G cellular connections. The truth is that self-driving cars will bathe passengers and nearby residents in microwave radiation. As you will now see, the health impact of this technology may outweigh any benefits from self-driving cars and other elements of the smart city.

Health Impact of Microwave Technologies

Scientific developments over the past few years have completely upended our safety regulations for wireless technology. It has always been assumed that if microwave radiation does not heat you, it can’t possibly hurt you. However, our best science now shows this to be false.

The most important research to do this is the \$25 million National Toxicology Program (NTP) study. This federal government study was designed to prove, once and for all, that cell phone radiation is safe. Instead, it showed that 2G cell phone radiation causes brain cancer and DNA damage in rats. This study is the gold standard of science and the results were so surprising that researchers released preliminary findings early so that we could start to make better decisions.

In the coming years, there must be a change in public policy (like there once was with tobacco) if we are to have a sustainable society. To this end, the American Cancer Society has said that the NTP results mark a “paradigm shift in our understanding of radiation and cancer risk.” We are also starting to see medical organizations around the world, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), issue guidelines for reduced wireless exposure for children.

Furthermore, while cancer risk is important, it is not even the primary risk with electromagnetic field (EMF) pollution. If you search “EMF science” you will find abundant research that shows sperm damage and negative effects



on immune, endocrine, cardiac, and nervous system functioning. This is why many people are now experiencing symptoms, such as headaches, tinnitus, and sleep disturbance, when overexposed to wireless technology.

While the mainstream medical community is not yet acknowledging this problem, many doctors are now well aware that people are being affected and are advising their patients to avoid excess EMF pollution. Often, this is a primary solution to help their patients heal.

Solutions You Can Implement Today

The good thing about this issue is that there are solutions—both at the personal and community level. You should encourage your city leaders to delay implementing smart city technology until the science is settled. This will ultimately be more wise and economical than dismantling expensive equipment in the future. And, if a wireless company wants to install an antenna on a light pole near your home, band together with your neighbors to protest the placement. A community working together is more powerful than any wireless company.

On a personal level, here are key solutions that will help you use technology more safely:

When at the gym, use an iPod with a wired headset.

- » Move toward wired technology at home. Ethernet and a wired router are the healthiest option for Internet and TV use. I use a combination of fiber optics and Ethernet in my home. If you must use Wi-Fi, put the router on a timer so that it is off at night. At night, you want to reduce or eliminate exposure to blue light and EMF pollution.
- » Eliminate cordless phones and wireless baby monitors from your home. Wired landline phones are the healthiest option for long calls. Search “safe baby monitor” to find a good option online.
- » Request an analog meter from your utility company. In California, nearly 100,000 families have switched back to analog meters because of the health and privacy risks associated with wireless smart meters.
- » Demand that your child’s school utilize wired Internet access. Many forward-thinking parents are now working to make schools safer by eliminating Wi-Fi. A growing number of schools are going back to wired computing, which is actually the future.
- » Measure your home for EMF pollution. With a few measurement devices or the help of a professional consultant, you can learn

what is happening within your home and make a few changes that will greatly reduce your EMF exposure.

The coming years will likely see an expansion in wireless technology with the development of smart cities. However, with what science shows us, we can no longer consider wireless technology a “green” solution.

Society will eventually have to balance the benefits and risks of technology. Hopefully, the above solutions will help you navigate this transition so that you and your family can use technology in a healthier way. 🐦

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