

FACT SHEET

EMF IN THE WORKPLACE

EU DIRECTIVE 2013/35/EU AND UK REGULATION 588/2016

The effects of electromagnetic fields (EMFs) is a growing concern in the workplace.

Effective from July 2016, it is a LEGAL requirement in Europe to monitor EMF levels in all workplaces to ensure employees will not be harmed or suffer long-term ill effects from exposure.



Certain types of workplace equipment can produce intense electromagnetic fields (EMFs). Individuals repeatedly exposed to them can face health risks and ultimately ill health. It is a mandatory requirement under the EMF Directive for employers to measure and mitigate against the effects of EMF in the workplace.

What is an EMF and an EMF field?

An EMF is produced whenever a piece of electrical or electronic equipment is used, and as such are present in virtually all workplaces. They are static electric, static magnetic and time-varying electric, magnetic and electromagnetic (radio wave) fields with frequencies up to 300 GHz.

EMF consists of three kinds of fields. The first is a 'standing wave' which is a magnetic field leaking from equipment such as large transformers, current carrying conductors, electric motors etc. This type of field is 'trapped' around its source. Personnel exposed to such fields are those who are stationed near the vicinity of the source.

A second type of field is a 'static field' where a non-changing magnetic field can exist around a magnet or a DC current carrying conductor.

The third type of field found in a work area is a 'travelling wave' which is produced by radio transmitting devices such as any electronic equipment with a fast-changing pulses, such as a computer, TV, or a radio transmitter.

The International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP)

The ICNIRP has defined the safe limits that the human body can be safely exposed to for long periods without suffering any ill effects. The EU EMF Directive (2013/35/EU) has been transposed into the UK law (Reg. 588/2016). Additional to the ICNIRP Reference Levels, Reg.588/2016 provides the Action Limits for a work environment to apply action measures in order to mitigate the risks when such limits are exceeded.

The EMF Directive

The EMF Directive deals with the human exposure and the measurement of electromagnetic fields, to ascertain that a work place is a safe place for employees. The Directive is applicable to all workplaces in Europe. From July 2016, all employers are legally obliged to measure and mitigate against the effects of EMF.

What do employers need to do?

As an employer you must assess the levels of EMFs to which your employees may be exposed and ensure that exposure is within the acceptable limits. Measures must be put in place to comply with the exposure limits, and the risks of exposure assessed and eliminated or minimised.

You must make sure you consider employees at particular risk, such as expectant mothers and workers with active or passive implanted or body-worn medical devices.

The majority of employers will not need to take any additional action to reduce the risk from EMFs. This may be because the levels are already safe, or where employees may be exposed to higher levels of EMFs levels have already been assessed and managed.

The Intertek advantage

Intertek can measure and assess EMFs in the workplace. From a provisional assessment to full workplace electromagnetic environment measurements and consultancy services for mitigation measures, we can support you to ensure your workplace is compliant with the EMF Directive.

About Intertek

Intertek is a leading Total Quality Assurance provider to industries worldwide. Through our network of more than 1,000 laboratories and offices and over 43,000 people in more than 100 countries, we want to demonstrate through our services that we are leading the industry to meet the growing needs of our customers.

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