

## Officials object to 4G phones pending data on health risks

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**By Zafrir Rinat**

The health and environmental protection ministries oppose the introduction of fourth-generation cellular communications technology until the effects of exposure to the radiation it generates have been properly studied.

The new technology is likely to increase the public's overall exposure to radiation, the ministries explained, and therefore, further study of the need and justification for this technology is required.

Health Ministry Director General Ronni Gamzu and Environmental Protection Ministry Director General Alona Sheaffer wrote to Communications Ministry Director General Eden Bar Tal two weeks ago to request a meeting on the matter. The technology, which sends information at a speed of 100 megabytes per second in wireless transmissions and 1,000 megabytes per second in landline transmissions, was approved for use a few weeks ago by the International Telecommunication Union.

Dr. Stelian Gelberg, who heads the Environmental Protection Ministry's radiation and noise department, said the new technology can transmit information 1,000 times faster than existing cellular technology.

"That requires a higher power output by each transponder, and therefore, there will be an increase in radiation as well, unless a transmission station is set up in every house," he said. "It seems most of the power will come from existing facilities, but new ones will clearly be set up as well. The power needed to transmit information to one 4G device is equal to the power needed to transmit information to five 3G devices."

Gelberg noted that a government panel set up to study the new technology had previously concluded that public hearings are needed. "We need to examine the significance of and justification for using this technology," he said.

For instance, he explained, the technology might be justified if it improved doctors' access to vital medical information, but not if it merely enabled someone to watch a popular television show on their cell phone.

The Environmental Protection Ministry plans to propose that fiber-optic networks be used to transmit data for 4G systems, instead of building additional transponders. Another option is to combine transponders and fiber-optic networks, which would also reduce exposure to hazardous radiation.

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