

Time to Talk About Towers and Radiation

A couple in [Tinmouth](#) are fighting for their health and safety trying to oppose a proposed radio tower ~500 feet from their home of 50+ years.

Westmore residents are [collaborating](#) to protect the natural beauty of their homes and Vermont's beloved [Lake Willoughby](#) from a [recently approved](#) radio tower.

A family in [Pownal](#) have spent a year dealing with the tortuous telecom siting process called Section 248a, trying to relocate a proposed cell tower away from their children and home in the woods of Vermont.

[Rochester](#) residents have [organized](#) to share research and concerns regarding environmental and [health impacts of a proposed tower](#) in their community.

[Marshfield, Manchester](#), Washington, the list goes on with many communities in VT pushing back on this unprecedented telecom infrastructure roll out.

Vermonters are actively opposing proposed towers due to [inadequate setbacks from homes, schools and sensitive areas, scientifically documented harms](#) and negative health impacts of radiation on humans, [wildlife, ecosystems](#), and environment, decreases in property values and their desire to steward local areas and protect Vermont's scenic beauty.

Currently here in the US, any and all considerations of the negative health impacts are prohibited in the siting of cell towers and telecommunication infrastructure. This was preempted by the [1996 Telecom Act](#) which mandates ignoring the reality of negative health effects when considering telecom siting.

People have had enough of this betrayal. The 1996 Telecom Act is a three decades old law which has miserably failed to address rapidly escalating radiation and its documented and well understood harms.

A lawsuit emerged and on August 16, 2021 [Environmental Health Trust](#) (EHT) won a landmark case resulting in a federal court ordering the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to explain why it ignored scientific evidence showing harm from wireless radiation.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences also published the [National Toxicology Program \(2\)](#) study which assessed tumors and heart damage in rats due to radiofrequency radiation. They concluded that the FCC limits should be strengthened up to 200-400 times the current level in order to protect children.

To date, this court order and the massive compilation of peer reviewed research demonstrating harms from wireless radiation exposures have been blatantly ignored by the FCC and the FDA. Zero action has been taken to address this [overwhelming body of research](#).

Even more egregious, the United States allows 10-100 times [higher levels of radiofrequency radiation](#) (RF) radiation from cell towers and wireless infrastructure than most countries including Greece, Canada, Israel, Chile, Belgium, Croatia, Bulgaria, India, Switzerland, Russia, China, and Italy.

Other countries have developed transparent accountability frameworks through monitoring and compliance enforcement to provide protections for communities, the environment and vulnerable populations.

For example, in 2015, [France](#) passed [legislation](#) to ban Wi-Fi and wireless devices in nursery schools, reduce WiFi in schools, require cell tower radiation compliance, offer tools for citizens to verify radiation measurements near homes and establish an agency to evaluate research on health effects from radiation exposure and handle compliance and enforcement of this law.

[Many countries](#) such as Turkey, Greece, Chile, Bangladesh, Australia, Israel, New Zealand, and Russia prohibit cell towers on school grounds. Australia capped radiation emission limits at 1% of federal levels near schools. Turkey mandates ongoing monitoring and compliance of radiation levels at schools and hospitals. Bangladesh banned cell towers on residential buildings, schools, colleges,

playgrounds, and in high density areas. Chile prohibits cell antennas in sensitive places such as kindergartens, hospitals and nursing homes. Toronto, Canada advises radiation limits set 100 times lower than federally accepted levels.

Why is the US not taking action to protect the health of the people, the environment and wildlife, from known and documented health effects of RF radiation?

The past two decades have seen an explosion of radio frequency radiation via wireless personal devices, wearables, environmental and weather research and experimentation, sensor technology, mega frequency expansions, surveillance enhancements and proliferation of communications infrastructure including thousands of launched satellites, cell towers and small cell antennas in our environment and communities.

The FCC and other agencies' reluctance to actually regulate and ensure thorough reviews of the ongoing research on harms related to wireless frequencies should not be surprising.

In 2015, Harvard University's Edmund J Safra's Center for Ethics published Norm Alster's book, "[Captured Agency](#): How the Federal Communications Commission is dominated by the industries it presumably regulates." This book details rampant conflict of interest, revolving door issues and funding concerns. The primary message is summarized in this statement,pp

"The FCC sits at the core of a network that has allowed powerful moneyed interests with limitless access a variety of ways to shape its policies, often at the expense of the fundamental public interests."

Currently, the FCC is drafting rules that if passed would prohibit states and towns from holding any jurisdiction over the siting of towers, antennas, and other wireless infrastructure. The National Call for Safe Technology also recently alerted the public to Congressional Bill, HR 3557 described by telecom Attorney Andrew Campanelli, as deceptive, insidious and evil, and "designed to strip all powers from state and local governments... over the placement of [wireless] facilities."

If these become law, the telecom industry will effectively govern itself and place unregulated and unmonitored radiating wireless infrastructure wherever they please. Property values and scenic beauty will take a dive while the health of humans and ecosystems will literally be placed in harm's way.

Solving this problem will require the creation of state level regulations which guarantee the use of peer reviewed scientific research on safe setbacks and allow the scientific evidence of radio frequency harms to be considered while determining placement of wireless infrastructure.

Vermont must claim statewide jurisdiction over telecom infrastructure, establish safe and acceptable radiation emission and power output levels, and create a framework for monitoring, compliance and enforcement of these levels in our communities. It is urgent that this issue be addressed before more harm and damage are done.

Alison Despathy is Vermonters for a Clean Environment's (VCE) Community & Environmental Health Director. This article first appeared in VCE's December newsletter. For a list of resources and scientific articles used to compile this article, email Alison.despathy@vce.org