

CELL PHONES ON



MITSU YASUKAWA DAILY NEWS



New Yorkers, like Brett Feldman (background) and Mariana Weickert (photo I.), say their livelihoods depend on their cell phones.

PATRICK ANDRADE

Feds decide how much radiation is too much

By **BILL EGBERT**
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

There will soon be a new number besides price to consider when shopping for a cell phone — one that will tell you how much radiation is being absorbed by your brain.

Nokia, Qualcomm, Motorola and other big-name makers of the ever-growing number of wireless phones will be required to detail radiation emissions on the new ones they produce.

The Cellular Telecommunication Industry Association, which is mandating the disclosure, says consumers should start seeing the new labeling on store shelves in three to six months.

The disclosure plan is intended to ease growing concern over health risks after several recent studies — and a striking about-face by the scientist leading the industry's research program — have called into question whether the devices 100 million Americans use every day are safe.

Experts, however, point out that the bulk of the research from dozens of studies has concluded the radiation given off by cell phones is safe or has found few signs of risk.

Last month, Maryland neurologist Chris Newman filed an \$800 million lawsuit against Motorola and Verizon, blaming his cell phone for his brain cancer.

The case joins more than a dozen suits filed over the last eight years alleging that exposure to cell-phone signals caused or aggravated brain tumors.

The charges have been fueled by several studies expressing concern over the

potential for danger.

The industry labels that consumers will start seeing will detail how much radiation is absorbed by your body while you are using a cell phone.

The Federal Communications Commission's specific absorption rate, or SAR, a benchmark of what level is considered safe, is being questioned by some experts.

A Daily News survey of the radiation numbers for several popular phones shows that many of the models come in just inside the FCC safety limit.

WEIRD SCIENCE

Shortly after the first brain-tumor suit was filed in 1992, the industry association pledged \$25 million to study cell phone safety and hired Dr. George Carlo, an epidemiologist and lawyer, to head up the research under an independently run entity called Wireless Technology Research.

Carlo had a controversial history of working with industries trying to clean up their images. In the early 1990s, he worked for the Chlorine Institute in its effort to downplay the dangers of dioxin, and he did a study for tobacco giant Philip Morris showing how personal biases among scientists could cause them

GAUGING THE JUICE

To find the Specific Absorption Rate of your cell phone, look on the back of the phone under the battery for the FCC ID code. Enter that code, including hyphens, on the FCC Internet search page — www.fcc.gov/oet/fccid/.

Then click "View Exhibits" and download the SAR test results — usually labeled "Test Report" or "SAR Results."

The SAR shows the amount of radiation your body absorbs as you use the phone, measured in watts per kilogram (w/kg).

To be licensed by the FCC, a phone must deliver an SAR of no higher than 1.6 w/kg at maximum power — a standard that is being called into question.

The position of the phone, the distance from a base station and obstructions interfering with the signal affect a phone's SAR. Phone makers are quick to say that the SARs filed with the FCC are at maximum power and don't represent the average SAR during normal use.

Bill Egbert

to overestimate the hazards of second-hand smoke.

After \$25 million and six years of work, Wireless Technology Research closed in December when the industry funding dried up. Carlo went public to say that he saw some "red flags."

"When we say the jury's still out," Carlo said of the debate in the scientific community over cell phone dangers, "it doesn't mean that they're neutral. There are definite red flags. We just don't know

whether it's a big problem or a little problem."

He turned up the heat on the industry in an interview with ABC's "20/20" in October in which he said he no longer had confidence that cell phones are safe.

Days before, Carlo wrote to AT&T's chief executive officer, Michael Armstrong, outlining some of his unpublished findings, including, he said, a higher brain-cancer death rate and double the rate of a rare type of brain tumor

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