

Section 3

Sources of Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Fields

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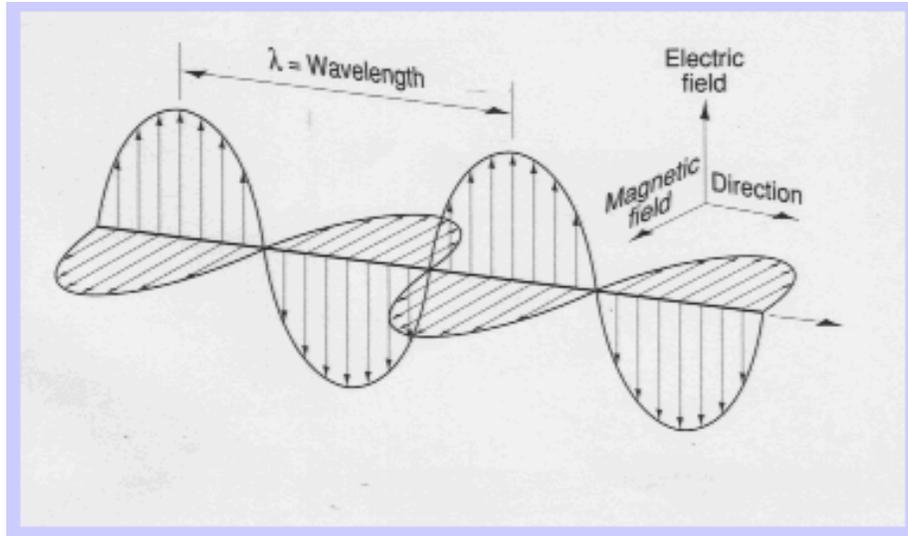
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3.1 Radiofrequency Electromagnetic Waves

What Is a Radiofrequency (RF) Wave?

RF waves are electromagnetic (EM) waves used for radio transmission. They carry electromagnetic energy as they propagate in free air and dense media.

A changing electric field will create a changing magnetic field, and a changing magnetic field will create a changing electric field.¹



“TEM wave” courtesy of [Wikibooks](#) (CC BY-SA)

What Is a Continuous RF Wave?

RF wave(s) with:

- successive identical oscillations
- constant height (amplitude)
- constant repetition (frequency)
- constant output power equal to the average power
- varying sinusoidally with time.^{2,3}

Examples: power supplies, plasma etching, welding/cutting arcs, continuous wave NMR, antennas, mobile phone communication, cordless phones, AM and FM broadcasting, anti-theft devices, RF heat sealers, portable radio systems, burglar alarms, microwave ovens, etc.

What Is a Pulsed RF Wave?

RF waves that are pulsed:

- The transmitter is pulsed, i.e., “on” for a short time and turned “off” for a longer time.
- Best example: radar
- Common radar frequencies: 50–330 MHz, 300–1,000 MHz, 1–2 GHz, 2–4 GHz, 4–8 GHz, 8–12 GHz, 12–18 GHz, 18–27 GHz, 27–40 GHz, 40–100+ GHz^{4,5}
- Human exposures to radar systems are from police speed control radar, airplane and ship radar, meteorological precipitation monitoring, and ground-penetrating radar for geological observations.
- Examples of pulsed RF devices: keyless entry pulsed NMR systems, analog or digital radar from airports, ships, speed detection, military devices, satellites, electronic test equipment, etc.

What is the “microwave hearing effect”?

An ability of some people with normal hearing to perceive pulsed RF fields.⁶

Natural Sources of RF

Natural RF emitters:

- earth
- sun
- thunderstorm activity
- the ionosphere
- deep-space extraterrestrial sources

Thunderstorm RF:

- 30–300 MHz
- Very High Frequency (VHF)⁷⁻⁹

Characteristics of Natural RF:

- Does not pass through hills or large structures
- Cannot be transmitted beyond the horizon
- Does not bend readily around the earth's curvature
- Is reflected from the atmosphere.

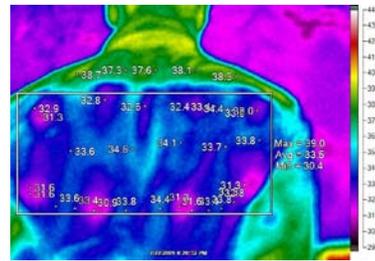
RF Utility: Little use has been made of naturally generated VHF fields.

Biological Sources of RF/EMF

Humans and mammals emit EMF energy

A human body, at 37°C, emits an EMF of:

- Frequency: 31 THz (31,000 GHz)
- Wavelength: 9.66 μm



“Thermal image” courtesy of [Dhama Innovations Pvt. Ltd.](#), [Wikimedia](#) (CC BY-SA)

3.2 Consumer Products

Wireless Phone Evolution

First generation (1G) mobile phones – 1980s¹⁰

- Frequency: 450 MHz, 800–900 MHz
- Radiated power: 600 mW (0.6 W)
- Analogue circuit-switched technology



“History of mobile phones” courtesy of [Marus](#), [Wikipedia](#) (CC BY-SA)

Second generation (2G) mobile phone systems – 1990s

- Frequency: 800, 900, 1500, 1800, 1900 MHz (US)
- Pure digital technology
- Caller identity and text messaging



“Cell Phone Cameras” courtesy of [compujeramey](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY)

Third generation (3G) mobile phone systems – 2001

- Frequencies: 1885–2025, 2110–2200 MHz
- Added broadband internet and high-tech video calls
- Able to use 2G and 2.5G networks where the 3G service unavailable¹¹



“Mobile phone” courtesy of [Irfan Nasir, Wikipedia](#) (CC BY-SA)

Wireless Phones

- Frequencies: 850 MHz, 900 MHz, 1700 MHz, 1800 MHz, 1900 MHz, 2100 MHz
- Power emitted: maximum power transmitted 1 to 2 watts
- RF exposure is below HC SC 6 when radiating structure is 2.5 cm away from body
- RF exposure: When **less than** 2.5 cm from the body (excluding hands, wrists, feet, and ankles), the potential for exceeding Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) limit depends on the operating configurations and exposure conditions of the device
- Phones emit **less power** when close to base station.¹²

Mobile Phone Base Stations

- Emit less RF than non-cable television transmitter
- Are low-power, multi-channel, two-way radios
- Antennae transmit ~ 60 watts of RF power
- Public exposures at **several meters from antennae** are typically **3000 to 1,000,000 times below HC SC 6**
- Dead zones occur when handset or mobile site is blocked by hilly terrain, excessive foliage, physical distance, or excessive cell phone use¹³⁻¹⁶



“charade #47 answer” courtesy of [ndrwfgg, Flickr](#) (CC BY)

Baby Monitors

- Frequencies: 16 MHz, 9.3–49.9 MHz, 900 MHz, 2.4 GHz
- Range: up to 300 m^{17,18}
- Power: 0.010 W to 3 W



“Baby Monitor” courtesy of [Jpsammy, Wikipedia](#) (CC BY-SA)

Bluetooth Devices

- Frequencies: 2.4 to 2.485 GHz – Industrial, Scientific and Medical (ISM) band
- No license required
- Range: short range of 5–100 m
- Power at head: 100 mW¹⁹
- Bluetooth products: Over 500 products including hands-free calling, GPS navigation, portable music players, wireless headsets, wireless speakers, wireless hands-free car systems, printers, laptops, cameras, health and fitness device computers, heart rate monitors, phones, home security systems, etc.



“Bluetooth Earbud” courtesy of [topgold](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY)

DECT, Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunication

- Frequencies: 902–928 MHz, 1880–1900 MHz, 1920–1930 MHz
- Range: 91 m in open area²⁰⁻²²

Cordless Phones

- Frequency: 43–49 MHz, 900 MHz, 2.4 GHz and 5.8 GHz
- Range: 12–75 m, 20–200 m, 60–450 m, 90–600 m
- Long Range: Up to 10 km
- Power: 1–5 watts²³
- Emitted Power: 0.2–1.0 mW/cm²
- Older cordless phone constant power: 10 mW
- Digital cordless phones – millisecond transmissions, average power: 0.01 mW



“Cordless Phone” courtesy of [JDB Photos](#), [Flickr](#)(CC BY-NC-SA)

Wireless Head Phones

- Frequency: 86–108 MHz, 863 MHz, 900 MHz, 913.5 MHz, 914 MHz, 914.5 MHz, 925 MHz, 926.0 MHz, 926.5 MHz, 2.4 GHz
- Range:
 - Home use: 1–3 m, 3–9 m, 10 m +
 - Industrial: 6–100 m²⁴



“Wireless Stereo Headset H3070” courtesy of [audiovisualjunkie](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY-NC-ND)

Uses: listening to music, watching a video

Wireless Home Security

- Frequencies: 43–49 MHz, 433 MHz, 902–928 MHz, 2.4 GHz–2.4835 GHz, 5.725 GHz and 5.850 GHz
- Typical output power: 10 to 100 mW (0.01–0.1 watts)
- RF emissions: 0.1% of HC SC 6 allowable exposure limits²⁵

Wi- Fi Systems

- Frequency: 2.4 GHz, 915 MHz, 5.8 GHz
- Power density: <0.003 W/m² to 0.03 W/m²
- Typical exposures: 1.8–4.6 V/m
- HC SC6 exposure limit: typical exposures 0.03% to 0.3% of HC SC6 limits
- Health Protection Agency: typical exposure 100 mW (0.1 W)^{26–30}

Smart Meters

- Frequency: 902–928 MHz
- End point power: ¼ Watt or 0.25 W
- Maximum power (cell relays): <0.5 W
- Instantaneous power density: at 30 cm: 0.02 to 0.04 W/m² (2 to 4 µW/cm²)
- Typical accumulated emission duration: approximately 60 seconds per day
- RF emissions from Smart Meters^{31,32}: Far below HC SC 6 exposure limits at 900 MHz: 600 µW/cm²

Example of measured instantaneous peak power densities from Smart Meters:

- One Smart Meter at 30 cm–3.2 µW/cm²
- One Smart Meter at 1 m–2.0 µW/cm²
- One Smart Meter at 3 m–1.2 µW/cm²
- Ten operating Smart Meters at 30 cm–4.0 µW/cm²
- Ten operating Smart Meters at 1 m–2.6 µW/cm²
- Ten operating Smart Meters at 3 m–1.8 µW/cm²



“Smart Meter” courtesy of [Duke Energy](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY-NC-ND)

Source: <http://www.bccdc.ca/NR/rdonlyres/43EF885D-8211-4BCF-8FA9-0B34076CE364/0/452012AmendedReportonBCHydroSmartMeterMeasurements.pdf>

AM Radio, FM Radio, and TV Transmissions

- Amplitude modulation (AM) radio frequency: 550 to 1600 kHz
- Frequency modulated (FM) radio frequency: 88 to 108 MHz
- Airborne television (TV) transmission frequency: 300 to 400 MHz
- Humans absorb up to five times more RF from FM radio and TV than from mobile phone base stations³³
- SC 6 exposure limits exceeded 1-2 m from AM radio antennae
- SC 6 exposure limits exceeded 1-2 m from FM radio antennae
- High powers present danger of electrocution with contact³⁴
- WorkSafeBC regulates permissible exposures to workers³⁵



(left) "Superturnstile Antenna" courtesy of Hans-Peter Scholz, [Wikipedia](#) (CC BY-SA)

(middle) "ENOME Anywhere!" courtesy of [Coolmitch](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY-NC-ND)

(right) "broadcast antenna" courtesy of [HerPhotographer](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY-NC-SA)

CB and FRS Radio

- Frequency: CB – 27 MHz, Family Radio Service (FRS) – 462/467 MHz
- Power: CB: 4 W; FRS: 500 mW–2 W³⁶



"Amateur Radio Rig" courtesy of [Joshua Fuller](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY-NC)

Microwave Ovens

- Frequency: home 2.45 GHz; industrial 915 MHz
- Power: home 400–1400 W
- Typical microwave oven leakage: up to 1 mW/cm²
- Average microwave oven leakage 0.17–0.52 mW/cm²(37,38)
- Physical/structural damage of microwave may result in RF leakage



“Microwave” courtesy of [DerekL, Flickr](#) (CC BY-NC-SA)

Table of power densities from common RF sources

- “Power density,” in units of microwatts per square centimeter ($\mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$), may be converted to watts per square meter (W/m^2)
- Table 1 describes the typical RF emissions from various RF sources³⁹

Table 1. RF source, frequency, power, and power density

RF Sources	Frequencies	Power	Typical Average Power Density Exposure
Mobile Phone	GMS 850, 1900 MHz	0.3–3 W	1000 to 5000 $\mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$ (at ear)
Microwave Oven	2450 MHz	400–1200 W	5000 $\mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$ (at 5 cm)
WiFi	2.4 GHz and 5.0 GHz	less than 1.0 W (FCC) less than SC 6 (HC)	0.001–20 $\mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$ Max average RF exposure level 0.232% of SC 6 limits
TV Broadcast VHF	54–216 MHz	10–100 kW	0.005–1.0 $\mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$
TV Broadcast UHF	470–698 MHz	500–5000 kW	0.005–1.0 $\mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$
Smart Meter at 1 m	902–928 MHz	0.25 W	0.0001–0.002 $\mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$
FM AM	88–108 MHz 535 kHz–1.7 MHz	FM 33 kW AM 50 kW	0.005 to 1 $\mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$ 500 $\mu\text{W}/\text{cm}^2$

3.3 RF Sources Used in Industry

- Frequencies: 135–6 MHz, 27.12 MHz, and 40.68 MHz^{40,41}
- Heat sealer power: 1,500 W to 60,000 W
- Exposures: Unprotected worker exposures are often five to eight times above allowable exposure limits
- Body to ground currents: >200 mA



“CalStateArch_PreservationLab6”
courtesy of [vlasta2](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY-NC-ND)

WorkSafeBC regulates permissible exposures to workers

Induction Heating (IH) Cooking Hotplates

- Frequency: 20–50 kHz, 26.1 kHz
- Power: commercial hobs: 1–3 kW
- Electric field strength: 10–20 V/m at 10 cm. Induced currents lower than HC SC6 guidelines⁴²

“Pressure Cooker on Induction Burner”
courtesy of [Dinner Series](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY)

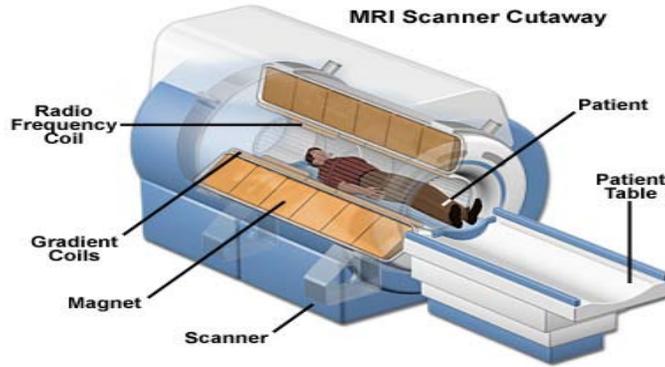


3.4 EMF Sources Used in Medicine

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) in Radiology

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a medical imaging technique used in radiology to visualize detailed internal structures. An MRI machine uses three different fields to generate images:

- A static magnetic field (average magnetic flux density of 1.5 to 3 Tesla) produced by a large magnet for the alignment of hydrogen nuclei (protons) inside the body.
- Low power time-varying magnetic field gradients (100 Hz to 1 kHz) generated by small magnets in three orthogonal directions to provide the spatial position of the protons. These MF gradients allow image slicing by focusing on the patient body part under examination.
- RF fields (10 to 400 MHz) to excite the protons (in the body) and cause them to emit radio waves for the acquisition of anatomical images.



“MRI Scanner” courtesy of [onlinedoctors](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY)

RF Ablation in Interventional Cardiology

Cardiac ablation is a procedure that can correct heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias).

It works by scarring or destroying tissue in the heart that triggers abnormal heart rhythms.^{43,44}

- Frequency: 485 kHz, 915 MHz
- Power: 40 W, 50 W, 150 W

Physiotherapy: Short- Wave Diathermy

- Frequency: 27.12 MHz
- Power: 500 W

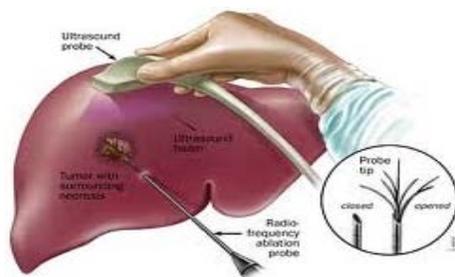
In diathermy, the heat generated by RF waves increases blood flow and speeds up metabolism and the rate of ion diffusion across cellular membranes. The fibrous tissues in tendons, joint capsules, and scars are more easily stretched when subjected to heat, thus facilitating the relief of stiffness of joints and promoting relaxation of the muscles and decrease of muscle spasms.⁴⁵



“DA-ST-84-02519” courtesy of [expertinfantry](#), [Flickr](#) (CC BY)

RF Tumour Therapy

- Frequency: 461 KHz
- Nominal power: 200 W
- Radiofrequency ablation – treats tumours in lung, liver, kidney and bone
- Needle-like RF ablation probe placed inside tumour
- RF waves increase temperature and destroy tumour
- May be combined with chemotherapy treatment^{46,47}



“Radiofrequency ablation (RFA) in liver cancer (hepatocellular carcinoma)” courtesy of [Hopkins Medicine.org](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org) (CC BY-NC)

Table 2. RF sources: frequency, power, and power density⁴⁸⁻⁵⁵

RF Medical Source	Frequencies	Power/Strength
Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)	0 Hz	Main Magnetic Field operating field 1-7 Tesla
	100 Hz to 1 kHz	Gradient Magnetic Field 1-5 mT (millitesla)
	Radiofrequency fields 10-400 MHz	Up to a few KW Not radiative
Cardiac Ablation	485 kHz, 915 MHz	40, 50, 150, 200 W
Shortwave Diathermy	27 MHz	500 W
Tumour Therapy	461 kHz	200 W

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