

Precautionary Framework

Update on WHO's Activities

This statement is presented to clarify WHO's plans for the development of the Precautionary Framework on Protection of Human Health.

WHO has embarked on a comprehensive, open and transparent process to develop a general framework for application of precautionary measures to protect public health. The Precautionary Framework is intended to cover all public health issues. Because the Framework is being developed by staff of WHO's International EMF Project, in collaboration with other key departments in WHO, there will be generic case studies on how to apply the Framework for many health concerns, including EMF.

As part of this process WHO held an international workshop in Luxembourg in February 2003 in collaboration with the European Commission and US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. At this workshop inputs were received from a diverse range of stakeholders. Based on this input WHO developed a comprehensive risk management Framework in which precaution plays a role in every stage of the risk management process.

In this Framework, the application of precautionary measures is considered throughout the process and not "invoked" in response to specific circumstances. Once this Framework is finalized WHO will develop generic case studies for ELF and RF fields that will provide information to Member States on ways they can apply the Framework to suit their own circumstances and needs. This two-step process was recommended by the Luxembourg Working Group.

The draft Framework has been made available for review to the Luxembourg Working Group participants, WHO management, the EMF Project's International Advisory Committee, and other key specialists in the world. The draft Framework is currently available for public comment on the WHO EMF Project web site (www.who.int/emf). We encourage the active participation of all stakeholders in this process. Please send comments to Dr Larry Goldstein at goldsteinl@who.int by 30 June 2003.