

Wi-Fi Testing Results

Recommendation

It is recommended that this report be received.

Background

In the launch of the BYOD component of our Vision for 21st Century Teaching and Learning, all schools were equipped with access points for Wi-Fi. As we moved forward with that work, we heard from individuals concerned about the potential health impact of Wi-Fi.

As with all health issues, the Peel board takes advice from public health agencies. Public Health Ontario states that there have been numerous studies on radiofrequency exposure and its impacts on human health, but that there is no evidence of negative health effects of Wi-Fi. The specified limits for public exposure apply to everyone—including the elderly, individuals with health concerns, children and pregnant women—and allow for continuous, 24/7 exposure. As well, the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that, “Considering the very low exposure levels and research results collected to date, there is no convincing scientific evidence that the weak radiofrequency signals from base stations and wireless networks cause adverse health effects.”

At the same time, the board agreed to go above and beyond regulation and policy requirements and to conduct representative testing of Wi-Fi levels in schools and work sites. We identified that testing would follow industry protocols and be conducted by an external independent consultant. The purpose of the testing was to help us to ensure Wi-Fi levels continue to be well below Health Canada’s guidelines for safe human exposure to radiofrequency energy (Safety Code 6). We committed that the results would be made public and that the completed tests be posted on www.peelschools.org/byod

The board retained G2S Environmental Consulting to complete electromagnetic radiation (EMR) testing at 25 schools. The list is a mix of north and south, elementary and secondary, and old and new schools. Testing occurred both during and after the regular school day. The testing reflects the total levels including any background emissions from nearby sources such as cell towers. In total, 551 locations were measured.

All measurements were well below the federally established Safety Code 6. The federal government recently reviewed and reaffirmed the Safety Code 6 limits of 10 W/m². In looking at comparative **maximum** average results by location, the percentage ranged from a low of less than two percent of maximum established, to a high of just under six percent of the Safety Code 6 requirements. In fact, 19 of the 25 results are less than five percent of the allowable limit.

In the conclusion, the report finds “**based on the findings of this survey, the RF measurements in the areas tested are well within the limits set by Health Canada Safety Code 6**”. The body of the report can be found at www.peelschools.org/byod.

As a board, we will continue to rely on the expertise and standards of public health organizations to guide our use of technology in schools, as they regularly review the most current scientific literature to inform respective guidelines and policies based on the weight of evidence. We will also continue to comply with all governing legislation to ensure we provide safe and appropriate places to learn and work. We will now conduct tests of WiFi levels annually as a component of our regular health and safety process.

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