

**For Discussion
on 19 April 2004**

**Legislative Council
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting**

Labelling Scheme for Hand-held Mobile Phones

Purpose

In the Council meeting held on 14 May 2003, the Hon Li Wah Ming asked a question about the labelling scheme for mobile phones. The purpose of this paper is to update Members about the progress on the said labelling scheme in response to Members' request.

Voluntary Certification Scheme

2. From 1 April 2003, the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) introduced a voluntary certification scheme for, among others, mobile phones. Under the voluntary certification scheme, mobile phone manufacturers and dealers may choose to submit their mobile phones for certification before these mobile phones are marketed and sold in Hong Kong. After the mobile phones are certified, they may also choose to affix the OFTA's authorised label to the certified mobile phones.

3. Irrespective of whether the mobile phone manufacturers and dealers submit their mobile phones to OFTA for prior certification under the voluntary certification scheme, all mobile phones sold in Hong Kong must meet the standards and specifications prescribed by the Telecommunications Authority under section 32D of the Telecommunications Ordinance. From 1 April 2003, the standards and specifications prescribed by the Telecommunications Authority include, inter alia, safety standards on radiofrequency radiation in terms of the Specific Absorption Rate (S.A.R.) limits. For any non-compliant mobile phones in the market, OFTA could inspect or investigate into consumer complaints and take enforcement action as necessary.

4. S.A.R. is a measuring scale of the rate at which radio-frequency energy is absorbed per kilogramme of tissue in a human body and is usually expressed in "watts per kilogramme" (W/kg). In consultation

with the Department of Health, OFTA has adopted the S.A.R. limits as recommended by the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and the American National Standards Institute/Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (ANSI/IEEE) in the certification of mobile phones. The limits are set at ICNIRP limit of maximum 2 watts per kilogram or ANSI/IEEE S.A.R. limit of maximum 1.6 watts per kilogram.

5. The compulsory requirement to comply with the S.A.R. limit has already safeguarded consumers' interest. The voluntary certification scheme is a step forward to facilitate consumers in choosing their mobile phones. The decision to implement the certification scheme on a voluntary as opposed to a mandatory basis is made after considering that there is already a compulsory requirement for compliance with the S.A.R. limit. Moreover, during OFTA's consultation with the Telecommunications Standard Advisory Committee constituted by representatives of the industry and Consumer Council in early 2003, the Committee also supported a voluntary certification scheme. We are also mindful of the possible burden imposed by a mandatory certification scheme on mobile phone manufacturers and dealers, especially those small and medium enterprises.

Outcome of Review of the Scheme

6. After the implementation of the above voluntary certification scheme on 1 April 2003, OFTA has streamlined the application procedures as far as possible to encourage manufacturers, suppliers and dealers of mobile phones to participate in the scheme and affix OFTA's prescribed label to their certified models of mobile phones. The streamlined application process includes that if the mobile phones have been certified by an overseas administration to meet the OFTA's equivalent technical specification and S.A.R. values, OFTA would recognise the certification and grant a OFTA's certification in a timely manner.

7. In addition, OFTA has launched a publicity programme by posting the promotional materials on OFTA's web site and distributing leaflets and posters to the general public.

8. OFTA has recently conducted a survey with all the manufacturers, suppliers and importers of mobile phones in the market in order to gauge the result of the implementation of the scheme. As of end of March 2004, OFTA has certified 205 models of mobile phones. They include

models from Nokia, Motorola, Sony Ericsson, NEC, Alcatel, LG, Panasonic, Philips, Samsung, Sharp and Siemens etc. Compared with the 55 certified models as of May 2003, there has been a substantial increase of almost 270 % in quantity. Out of the 205 certified models, about 52 models have been affixed with OFTA's prescribed label. It indicates that market forces are working well and suppliers are gradually joining the voluntary certification scheme to attract customers.

9. In order to find out the S.A.R. values of certified mobile phones, consumers may make an enquiry to OFTA's hotline on 2961 6320 or access OFTA's web-site at <http://www.ofta.gov.hk>. OFTA is maintaining an updated list of certified mobile phone with the brand names, model numbers, certificate numbers and the specified S.A.R. values. Alternatively, they may refer to the user manual of mobile phone or make an enquiry to the dealers. It is known that several major mobile phone manufacturers have published the S.A.R. values of their products onto their websites.

Way Forward

10. OFTA would continue to monitor the progress of the implementation of above scheme and conduct a further review where necessary.

Office of the Telecommunications Authority
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