Resolution recommending measures for educating the public on and reducing exposure to radiation from cell phones, including disclosure of radiation information at point of sale.

WHEREAS, The Policy Committee of the Commission on the Environment met on December 14, 2009 and unanimously adopted the findings and recommendations listed below; and

WHEREAS, More than 270 million people in the United States (US) use cell phones with an increasing number of them children; and,

WHEREAS, Cell phones are an important tool of communication, especially during times of emergency; and,

WHEREAS, A cell phone emits Radio Frequency (RF) radiation from the antenna of the device, often in a 360-degree pattern, as the device seeks to make a connection with the cell tower; and,

WHEREAS, Recently published long-term studies looking at cell phone use for 10 years have indicated evidence of increasing occurrence of brain and salivary cancers especially on the side of the head where cell phones are held; and,

WHEREAS, Children are potentially more vulnerable to this radiation exposure due to their smaller head size, thinner skulls, different composition of tissues, and still-developing brains and bodies; and,

WHEREAS, Governments around the world including France, Israel, Germany, Finland, and Switzerland, have issued warnings about prolonged cell phone use, especially for children; and,
WHEREAS, The French Senate is considering legislation that would restrict the promotion and sale of cell phones for use by children and would require companies to offer headsets with each phone sold; and,

WHEREAS, The maximum level of radiation emitted from a cell phone and absorbed by the human brain and body is called the Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) and these values range in cell phones from 0.2 to 1.6 W/kg, the maximum legal value in the US; and,

WHEREAS, The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not review the safety of cell phones before they come to market but does have the authority to take action against the unsafe exposure to radiation from these products; and,

WHEREAS, The United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has accepted the safety standards for cell phone radiation set by the electronics professional trade association, the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE); and,

WHEREAS, Cell phone radiation safety levels accepted by the FCC do not take into account potential increased vulnerabilities of children nor the cumulative effects of long-term use and do not provide sufficient protection in determining a maximum allowable SAR value of 1.6 W/Kg for the human head and brain; and,

WHEREAS, San Francisco has adopted a Precautionary Principle Ordinance that compels government agencies to heed early warning signs from the scientific literature and to take protective action to prevent harm; and,

WHEREAS, Cell phone manufacturers are required to report the SAR values of their phones to the FCC but are not obligated to make this information available to the public; and,

WHEREAS, Consumers in San Francisco, and beyond, have the right to know the level of radiation being emitted by cell phones as they make their purchasing decisions; and,
WHEREAS, Consumers in San Francisco should be informed of any steps that can be taken to minimize harm, such as the importance of using head-sets and texting as an alternative to speaking directly into the phone; now, therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Commission on the Environment recommends, as a matter of highest priority, that the:

a. City/County adopts legislation requiring that retailers of cell phones provide point-of-sale information on SAR values and information on safer use. The SAR value should be as visible to the consumer as the price.

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the San Francisco Commission on the Environment recommends that the following options be considered for action in the future:

b. Federal Government conduct a public review of cell phone safety standards and revise them based on peer-reviewed independent science, including the potential effects on children and the effects of long-term use, and consider a ban on cell phone advertising aimed at children.

c. State of California and the Federal Government adopt legislation that requires warning labels be placed on all cell phone packaging regarding exposure to radiation, especially for children.

d. City/County work closely with the School District to educate students, parents, caregivers and teachers about cell phone radiation and the importance of appropriate use of cell phones including: limiting their use to emergencies, use of a headset, and keeping the phone away from the child’s body to the maximum extent possible.

e. City/County work closely with the School District to prohibit the distribution of cell phone promotional materials and the use of cell phones as part of the curriculum especially for elementary schools.
f. City/County explore ways to encourage cell phone companies to develop
technologies, products, and educational programs that facilitate the safest
possible use of cell phones.

g. Director of the Department of the Environment and the Department of
Technology, under the Precautionary Purchasing Ordinance, require that cell
phones purchased by City Departments minimize SAR values and come with a
headset when necessary and educational materials on minimizing exposure to
radiation.

h. Department of the Environment staff initiate an educational campaign that
includes a web page to help consumers identify low SAR value phones and
protective measures to reduce exposure to cell phone radiation.

I hereby certify that this Resolution was approved at the Commission on
the Environment’s Meeting on January 26, 2010.

Monica Fish, Commission Secretary

Vote: Approved (5-1) (1 Absent)

Ayes: Commissioners Gravanis, Martin, Mok, Tuchow and Wald

Noes: Commissioner Pelosi Jr.

Absent: Commissioner King