

THIS IRRADIATED DYSTOPIA

The real dangers of smart
technology and mobile devices
explained!



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FOREWORD

We take mobile phones, laptop computers, tablets, wi-fi and energy smart meters pretty much for granted in this digital age.

After all, who can argue with the everyday convenience and technological marvel that such devices bring to our lives, and at increasingly affordable prices?

But there's another cost to meet, one yet to be calculated fully across coming years and decades: The radio frequency radiation emitted by internet routers, smart meters and other "connected" gadgets brings health risks and other causes for concern to we humans who use them.

My name is Russell Cavanagh and I write about money and economics issues at russellcavanagh.net and elsewhere. I've helped tech business start-ups and worked in and out of journalism over several years.

Some years ago, I was blessed to make friends with a remarkable lady called Amy O'Hair. She described herself as "a housewife" around when we first met.

Noble though it certainly is to be a home-maker, Amy was dogged for many years in her research work and campaigning about the hazards of smart technology.

She kindly gave me the following interview.

THIS IRRADIATED DYSTOPIA: AN INTERVIEW WITH AMY O’HAIR

Hi Amy, please give us an introduction to yourself

My name is Amy O’Hair, and I live in San Francisco, California. When asked what I do, I generally say I am a housewife, sometimes just for shock value.

Doing unpaid but vital work takes guts these days. I think it is part of my job to keep abreast of environmental and health issues; I help my family stay healthy, feed them good food, and make sure we can all enjoy our free time and relax. And it turns out a house with someone keeping it well produces less waste, saves energy and money, and just feels like a less chaotic and harried place to be.

Why is the issue of radiation through mobiles, wi-fi, smart meters, etc., important? What sort of devices should we be wary of and are there any tools that can help us measure for ourselves?

Wireless radiation safety is an under-reported issue in the mainstream media — but then lots of environmental health issues are. It’s the sheer numbers that makes this one so

pressing; now nearly everybody, and increasingly every child, has a microwave transmitter in their pocket.

There is a vast proliferation of wireless devices, and almost no clear public-health message about how to use them safely. To date, there are plenty of independent, well- executed studies showing a wide variety of biological effects from pulsed microwaves and new studies are published almost daily.

I find it a compelling and important issue, not least because our use of these devices is also cutting into other aspects of our well-being — like our parenting and social skills, our occupational health and self-care, our dwindling privacy and security.

On the streets in San Francisco it is easy to observe the level of frankly addicted behaviour that people of all ages have around smart phones. Are people making real, conscious decisions about their use of these devices?

For example, a woman stood in the street in front of my house the other day —dead still, utterly oblivious, swiping away — for ten solid minutes. In the street, not on the sidewalk. I went and stood behind her just to see if she would notice (she didn't). Mere convenience has given way to addiction, and, as history teaches, there is nothing as profitable as an addicted customer base.

Without having to measure anything, the message most people need to hear is: Get that thing further away from your brain and your body; don't put the cellphone next to your head; take the smart-phone out of your pocket; move the wi-fi router eight to 12 feet from your workspace; put the cordless phone off the desk, out of the bedroom (or in the bin); and opt out of the smart meter altogether.

“Off” is your friend. That's Wireless Safety 101.

If you've got compounding issues like an antenna on your building, or just need to see little red lights blinking their warning message, then a good-quality compact RF meter can be had for a reasonable price.

You gained some attention a few years back when resisting household energy smart meters. Can you give background about what actually happened?

I had followed the under-trained smart meter installer-cowboys in my neighbourhood for a week or two, and watched them slapping on these devices — on homes where no one had consented, or where a minor child had let them into the house, or apartments where they hadn't even bothered to ring any resident to inform them.

It was a visceral reaction, like ‘Get the cuss out of my neighbourhood!’. I have to say it was not the most thoroughly thought-out thing I’ve done in my short life as an activist

The SF District Attorney declined to prosecute my case, which was an unfortunate lost opportunity for public coverage. I went to community court, where everyone was exceedingly sympathetic and interested. As my community-service ‘sentence,’ I was basically asked to continue my activism. People called to say they’d never heard about the issue, until they’d read about this event.

When did it occur to you that radiation is a problem and what prompted your concerns?

At the end of 2010, I read about people coming to the California Public Utilities Commission here in San Francisco and speaking out against the smart meter program. I spent a solid couple months reading everything I could find on wireless radiation bio-effects. The science, on balance and filtered for industry-tainted studies, is very damning; the military knew its power to damage decades ago.

As for our house, I ditched our wi-fi router, and to my surprise found the frequent heart arrhythmias I had while working on the computer went away. That was over three

years ago, so no one can tell me it is a placebo effect. Later I read about the capacity of pulsed RF to disrupt heart function.

In one sense I was shocked by what I found, but in another, I recognized a familiar pattern — an environmental toxin that serves the needs of industry but presents a danger to the public.

In the early 1990s I read the science on trans fats, decided it wasn't actually food, and cut that out of my family's diet; twenty years later it is finally being recognized as the disease-maker it is. Bisphenol A is another poison-of-convenience for industry, which I spotted many years ago.

Now those two things are getting a drubbing in the media. Like so many others working on the wireless safety issue, I wonder how long it will be before this one gets the same public consideration.

Who is particularly at risk and how? Are everyday devices giving off high levels of radiation?

Children and pregnant women are more vulnerable to environmental toxins and there are already studies showing the damage RF does to children, before and after birth. Men who want healthy babies should also take notice of numerous studies on RF and sperm.

Yet the public remains largely oblivious to this. No one makes TV ads with a child or pregnant woman swigging beer, yet Apple is not taken to task for a commercial showing a pregnant mom on a smart-phone.

One of the most under-reported devices in this under-reported issue is the cordless phone. The correlation with brain tumours is even higher than with the mobile phone. I used one of these — a 900 MHz model for ten years, then a 2.4 GHz model for five — always talking on my left side, because that is how my brain is wired. I got the beginnings of a cataract in my left eye at 42 years old, which I attribute to this and some years of cellphone use on that ear as well.

The eye is quite vulnerable to RF, as the military found years ago. These devices are powerful, and the newer DECT ones have a base station that is essentially a cell tower inside your home 24/7. They should be outlawed or completely redesigned.

Mobile and smart meter companies seem to have been less than honest about health issues. Why do you think that is? Are government regulators doing a good job on this?

The wireless industry and the politicians who are prostituted to its deep coffers of money have a huge stake in keeping the public in a state of ignorance and confusion about

long-term wireless safety issues. The profits are enormous; they make the tobacco debacle of the twentieth century look like peanuts.

And the will of the US government to confront chronic public-health issues effectively dwindles by the decade. It is certainly possible to get overwhelmed by this state of affairs sometimes, so I focus on helping a few individuals, as I can, to become aware and begin to help themselves.

Most people will never read the science themselves and will never believe there is any danger unless and until a big government authority of some sort finally comes out with a clear warning.

That's why the US Surgeon General's warning about tobacco in 1964 was such a turning point, even though there had been 50 years of qualified scientists raising red flags about the dangers. I don't know if that is going to happen around wireless, even for my daughter's generation, because there is a quite different public culture now.

That said, I cannot turn away from the matter. There are many good people working on this fight, so I keep the faith and do what I can, even if some days it looks damned dark.

Companies seem to be asserting that smart meters will become compulsory. Is this the case? The UK government has stated publicly that smart meters are not mandatory, yet there seems to be a drive for a universal roll-out here in the UK.

Actual laws in the US on smart meters are pretty thin. In California the law on the books says the utilities must, eventually, offer people “time-of-use” metered electricity, and the utilities say they need to install smart meters in order to comply with this law.

But then much of what has happened regarding smart meters here is the result of our monopolistic “investor-owned” utilities (IOUs) just doing what they want — profits come before people and smart meters are good for profits; these techno-upgrades look good on the yearly report and there is plenty of harvested data to sell.

Electricity bills often mysteriously go up. And they can sack the meter readers. In Santa Clara they have even piggybacked a wi-fi network on top of the smart meters. *Ch-ching!*

In the UK, unlike the Wild West here, there has at least been some attempt by government regulators to assess whether or not smart meters are in fact anything beneficial. Do they actually reduce usage? Do they provide clear

benefits? It's encouraging to see any government body at all make enquiries.

In the US, regulatory agencies overwhelmingly bend to the will of the IOUs; who don't present any independent evidence as to benefits, just a sales pitch with a techno-shine — a classic corporate-welfare scam paid for with public monies.

What the utilities want is control and the profits that go with it — not energy reduction.

Isn't it a good thing that smart meters would allow companies to control our energy use through close monitoring and centralised control functions? If not, why not?

I take their point: There are times on very hot days when millions of people and businesses have their air-conditioning going full blast in California, and it's a huge spike in the grid. They fire up the coal plants just to fill in the gap in supply.

Wouldn't it be nice if they could just switch off some AC units, or turn all those temperature controls to 32 degrees instead of 22, where people would rather have it?

Or what if you are doing laundry at 2 pm., instead of when they'd like you to do it, like 2 am.? In an "emergency" they could switch off your washer and have it switch back on

when it was more convenient for “grid management.” That’s what is possible with smart meter technology, and new appliances have an RF chip to ‘talk’ to the smart meter.

But that is a highly intrusive technology, an invasion of privacy revealing micro-details about your home and controlling aspects of its functioning that should belong only to you. What the utilities want is control and the profits that go with it, not energy reduction.

There are few things easier than saving electricity. Turn it off, turn it down, use it less — spend twenty minutes on the internet, and you’re an expert. There are in-home monitors that completely lack any wireless radiation and they don’t compromise your privacy by broadcasting your usage or allowing utility control.

Smart meters are clearly not about saving energy. Every smart meter uses extra energy that the old meters never did, not least by having a microwave radio transmitter and antennas inside going off all day and night.

Reducing energy usage is a problem issue for profit-driven utilities. It cuts into profits. This is where the public good and private profit butt heads.

If your government makes no priority of localized energy generation, like solar, and gives no clear guidelines for reduced usage, then industry will step in with their priority to

maximise income. These are problems that cannot be made to go away by free-market capitalism.

What can people do to protect themselves from RF radiation? How do you avoid it and help others to do so?

Beyond those quick-and-dirty basics I gave in the second answer of this interview, some people do need some sort of measurements taken to assess the unknown aspects of their RF exposures, like nearby antennas.

I do measurement work for individuals in their homes so as to help them make choices or changes that reduce their wireless radiation exposure. They call me because they think the bank of smart meters in the basement of their apartment building is zapping them; but I often find they are already doing a very thorough job of zapping themselves with a smart-phone, a cordless phone, a wi-fi router, a microwave oven, and other consumer gadgets. It's not rocket science; if you can read numbers on a display, you're good.

Still, I'm thankful for the smart meter issue in the press having alerted people to the larger matter of personal RF exposure. That's how I woke up to it.

But not getting measurements taken is no excuse for continuing to talk on your mobile for an hour or three a day.

If you are doing that, you've got a serious problem, and you don't need an RF meter to tell you that.

Google CERENAT to read about the French study that puts to rest any doubt about your risk of brain tumor with even 30 minutes talk-time a day. Get a landline, or text, or speakerphone if you must gab — or just give your brain and body a break from the microwaves, more often and for longer.

You tweet a lot about the subject. How do you go about your research?

There are groups working on wireless safety issue and on smart meters, and I listen in.

I follow the work done by Dr Joel Moskowitz of the UC Berkeley School of Public Health. I track Dr Devra Davis and Environmental Health Trust, Citizens for Safe Technology in Canada, Dariusz Leszczynski and other scientists.

There are a lot of courageous and well-qualified people who are speaking out — speaking truthful science to deceitful power. I do not have a degree in science or epidemiology, but I have a good mind and have learned how to track the issue and sort out reality from hyperbole.

You also have a Youtube channel with lots of information, including handy hints and useful tips. Can you say more about that?

If nothing else, the aluminum screening industry should send me a thank-you letter for increasing their sales in an area they didn't even know existed — RF shielding!

Well, it works, and people wouldn't otherwise know about that without seeing my little video demo. I've got over a half a million views on videos that show smart meter pulses, low-tech ways to shield, sneaky cell antennas. Fun stuff.

My YT channel is, I think, a finished work. I don't want to be on the Google bandwagon anymore, and comments are unmanageable now that they have attempted to shove Plus down everyone's throat. So I go visit it every once in a while, and see that people are still finding it useful. But I will find some other venue for any future video venture.

Quite a few networks have sprung up in protest to smart meters in particular. Do you have any thoughts on this?

It's been a brilliant experience for me to be involved with Stop Smart Meters! here in California. Now there are similar groups all over the country and the world.

What I have personally liked is meeting people I probably wouldn't have otherwise; me, a lifetime urban liberal (or so I thought) hanging out with rural Tea-Party types or old-school activists from Marin.

I've learned much, but mostly what I've found at the core is people waking up to the level of corporate intrusion — with government collusion — in our lives.

When you stand on that platform, you find some unexpected companions and make some new friends. It is quite refreshing.

Good-quality RF and EMF meter, compact and fairly easy to use (but do read the one- page manual!): Cornet ED 78S Meter, \$149.95 (£92). Buying it here helps support Stop Smart Meters! <http://stopsmartmeters.org/store/>

Many thanks for the great interview, Amy!

Follow Amy O'Hair on Twitter - [@vegosapien](https://twitter.com/vegosapien). See Amy's practical tips and other related videos on Youtube – youtube.com/user/thisirradiatedlife.

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