EPA Begins Two-Year Monitoring Survey of Broadcast Radiation in Major United States Cities

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A specially built radiation monitoring van developed and manned by scientists of the Environmental Protection Agency will check the intensity of broadcast radiation from UHF and VHF television and FM radio transmitters in major cities of the United States within the next two years.

Seven major Eastern and Mid-Western cities will be studied by next October in the first phase of the EPA's analysis of environmental levels of radio and microwave radiation in urban areas of the United States.

The van and its three-man crew will conduct surveys in Miami, Florida; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New York City, and Chicago, Illinois. Surveys have already been completed in Boston, Massachusetts, and Atlanta, Georgia, and in parts of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Surveys will continue in the Western United States from October 1976 to September 1977.

Radio waves (electromagnetic radiation) are present everywhere in the environment in small amounts. In cooperation with an inter-agency working group chaired by the President's Office of Telecommunications Policy, EPA has begun the study to determine how much electromagnetic radiation there is in different parts of the nation and to find out what health effects, if any, the radiation can have on humans.

From 14 to 18 sites will be surveyed in each city. The location where measurements will be conducted, and the kinds of measurements to be made have been determined by the characteristics of the radiation sources, their distribution in the area, and the character of the city's buildings, terrain and population distribution.

The measurement system used was specifically developed by EPA to measure radiation levels with a high degree of accuracy, sensitivity, and frequency resolution. Large amounts of data can be acquired and processed in very short periods of time, and the results preserved and presented for interpretation by the small computer incorporated into the van system.

EPA's special mobile unit will measure the radiation (primarily from radio, television and microwave outlets), and process the data. The survey data will be combined with health effects research data, which are concurrently being developed by EPA's research activity. The combined data will be used to determine whether environmental criteria are required to control these nonionizing radiating sources.