

By ROSA PRINCE Political Correspondent Sept 6th 2007

POWER PYLONS CAN CAUSE CHILD CANCER

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THE possibility of a link between electricity pylons and childhood cancers was officially confirmed for the first time yesterday.

And Ministers are to consider issuing new guidelines to protect public safety.

A group of experts and campaigners met yesterday to consider whether houses beneath overhead power lines are safe.

They are expected to advise a change in planning rules to order power companies to put more cables underground.

A separate group is examining electric fields in the home and whether householders and electricians should be issued with new advice about keeping safe.

The guidance would include recommendations on packaging and advice on wiring plugs and other devices. Both panels will report to the Stakeholders Advisory Group on Electromagnetic Fields, which will hand its advice to the Government later this year.

Parents and campaigners have long been concerned about the possibility of a link between pylons and leukaemia in children.

Some experts fear up to 30,000 people may be exposed to potentially unsafe levels of electricity. But the government has always insisted power lines are safe.

However Department of Health advisers now say there is the possibility of a "weak" link between prolonged proximity to the high voltage lines and the childhood cancer leukaemia. The Health Protection Agency is urging Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt to implement "precautionary measures" to protect youngsters.

I >r Michael Clark, scientific spokesman for the HPA. said: "We issued our advice to government after finding a weak association between childhood leukaemia and living near major power lines.

"There is the possibility of a low risk -there is no definite risk - therefore we are advising the Government to consider precautionary approaches."

A spokesman for the Department of Health said: "We realise this is an important issue which has caused anxiety.