



Recommendation ITU-R P.526-14
(01/2018)

Propagation by diffraction

P Series
Radiowave propagation



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Note: This ITU-R Recommendation was approved in English under the procedure detailed in Resolution ITU-R 1.

Electronic Publication
Geneva, 2018

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RECOMMENDATION ITU-R P.526-14

Propagation by diffraction

(Question ITU-R 202/3)

(1978-1982-1992-1994-1995-1997-1999-2001-2003-2005-2007-2009-2012-2013-2018)

Scope

This Recommendation presents several models to enable the reader to evaluate the effect of diffraction on the received field strength. The models are applicable to different obstacle types and to various path geometries.

The ITU Radiocommunication Assembly,

considering

that there is a need to provide engineering information for the calculation of field strengths over diffraction paths,

recommends

that the methods described in Annex 1 be used for the calculation of field strengths over diffraction paths, which may include a spherical earth surface, or irregular terrain with different kinds of obstacles.

Annex 1**1 Introduction**

Although diffraction is produced only by the surface of the ground or other obstacles, account must be taken of the mean atmospheric refraction on the transmission path to evaluate the geometrical parameters situated in the vertical plane of the path (angle of diffraction, radius of curvature, height of obstacle). For this purpose, the path profile has to be traced with the appropriate equivalent Earth radius (Recommendation ITU-R P.834). If no other information is available, an equivalent Earth radius of 8 500 km may be taken as a basis.

2 Basic concepts

Diffraction of radiowaves over the Earth's surface is affected by terrain irregularities. In this context, before going further into the prediction methods for this propagation mechanism, a few basic concepts are given in this section.

2.1 Fresnel ellipsoids and Fresnel zones

In studying radiowave propagation between two points A and B, the intervening space can be subdivided by a family of ellipsoids, known as Fresnel ellipsoids, all having their focal points at A and B such that any point M on one ellipsoid satisfies the relation:

$$AM + MB = AB + n \frac{\lambda}{2} \quad (1)$$

where n is a whole number characterizing the ellipsoid and $n = 1$ corresponds to the first Fresnel ellipsoid, etc., and λ is the wavelength.

As a practical rule, propagation is assumed to occur in line-of-sight (LoS), i.e. with negligible diffraction phenomena if there is no obstacle within the first Fresnel ellipsoid.

The radius of an ellipsoid at a point between the transmitter and the receiver can be approximated in self-consistent units by:

$$R_n = \left[\frac{n \lambda d_1 d_2}{d_1 + d_2} \right]^{1/2} \quad (2)$$

or, in practical units:

$$R_n = 550 \left[\frac{n d_1 d_2}{(d_1 + d_2) f} \right]^{1/2} \quad (3)$$

where f is the frequency (MHz) and d_1 and d_2 are the distances (km) between transmitter and receiver at the point where the ellipsoid radius (m) is calculated.

Some problems require consideration of Fresnel zones which are the zones obtained by taking the intersection of a family of ellipsoids by a plane. The zone of order n is the part between the curves obtained from ellipsoids n and $n - 1$, respectively.

2.2 Penumbra width

The transition from light to shadow defines the penumbra region. This transition takes place along a narrow strip (penumbra width) in the boundary of geometric shadow. Figure 1 shows the penumbra width (W) in the case of a transmitter located a height, h , above a smooth spherical earth, which is given by:

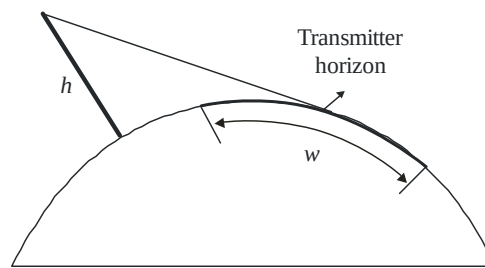
$$w = \left[\frac{\lambda a_e^2}{\pi} \right]^{1/3} \text{ m} \quad (4)$$

where:

λ : wavelength (m)

a_e : effective Earth radius (m)

FIGURE 1
Definition of penumbra width



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2.3 Diffraction zone

The diffraction zone of a transmitter extends from the LoS distance where the path clearance is equal to 60% of the first Fresnel zone radius, (R_1), up to a distance well beyond the transmitter horizon where the mechanism of troposcatter becomes predominant.

2.4 Obstacle surface smoothness criterion

If the surface of the obstacle has irregularities not exceeding Δh ,
where:

$$\Delta h = 0.04 [R\lambda^2]^{1/3} \quad \text{m} \quad (5)$$

where:

R : obstacle curvature radius (m)

λ : wavelength (m);

then the obstacle may be considered smooth and the methods described in §§ 3 and 4.2 may be used to calculate the attenuation.

2.5 Isolated obstacle

An obstacle can be considered isolated if there is no interaction between the obstacle itself and the surrounding terrain. In other words, the path attenuation is only due to the obstacle alone without any contribution from the remaining terrain. The following conditions must be satisfied:

- no overlapping between penumbra widths associated with each terminal and the obstacle top;
- the path clearance on both sides of the obstacles should be, at least, 0.6 of the first Fresnel zone radius;
- no specular reflection on both sides of the obstacle.

2.6 Types of terrain

Depending on the numerical value of the parameter Δh (see Recommendation ITU-R P.310) used to define the degree of terrain irregularities, three types of terrain can be classified:

a) *Smooth terrain*

The surface of the Earth can be considered smooth if terrain irregularities are of the order or less than $0.1R$, where R is the maximum value of the first Fresnel zone radius in the propagation path. In this case, the prediction model is based on the diffraction over the spherical Earth (see § 3).

b) *Isolated obstacles*

The terrain profile of the propagation path consists of one or more isolated obstacles. In this case, depending on the idealization used to characterize the obstacles encountered in the propagation path, the prediction models described in § 4 should be used.

c) Rolling terrain

The profile consists of several small hills, none of which form a dominant obstruction. Within its frequency range Recommendation ITU-R P.1546 is suitable for predicting field strength but it is not a diffraction method.

2.7 Fresnel integrals

The complex Fresnel integral is given by:

$$F_c(v) = \int_0^v \exp\left(j \frac{\pi s^2}{2}\right) ds = C(v) + jS(v) \quad (6)$$

where j is the complex operator equal to $\sqrt{-1}$, and $C(v)$ and $S(v)$ are the Fresnel cosine and sine integrals defined by:

$$C(v) = \int_0^v \cos\left(\frac{\pi s^2}{2}\right) ds \quad (7a)$$

$$S(v) = \int_0^v \sin\left(\frac{\pi s^2}{2}\right) ds \quad (7b)$$

The complex Fresnel integral $F_c(v)$ can be evaluated by numerical integration, or with sufficient accuracy for most purposes for positive v using:

$$F_c(v) = \exp(jx) \sqrt{\frac{x}{4}} \sum_{n=0}^{11} \left[(a_n - jb_n) \left(\frac{x}{4}\right)^n \right] \quad \text{for } 0 \leq x < 4 \quad (8a)$$

$$F_c(v) = \left(\frac{1+j}{2}\right) + \exp(jx) \sqrt{\frac{4}{x}} \sum_{n=0}^{11} \left[(c_n - jd_n) \left(\frac{4}{x}\right)^n \right] \quad \text{for } x \geq 4 \quad (8b)$$

where:

$$x = 0.5\pi v^2 \quad (9)$$

and a_n , b_n , c_n and d_n are the Boersma coefficients given below:

$a_0 = +1.595769140$	$b_0 = -0.000000033$	$c_0 = +0.000000000$	$d_0 = +0.199471140$
$a_1 = -0.000001702$	$b_1 = +4.255387524$	$c_1 = -0.024933975$	$d_1 = +0.000000023$
$a_2 = -6.808568854$	$b_2 = -0.000092810$	$c_2 = +0.000003936$	$d_2 = -0.009351341$
$a_3 = -0.000576361$	$b_3 = -7.780020400$	$c_3 = +0.005770956$	$d_3 = +0.000023006$
$a_4 = +6.920691902$	$b_4 = -0.009520895$	$c_4 = +0.000689892$	$d_4 = +0.004851466$
$a_5 = -0.016898657$	$b_5 = +5.075161298$	$c_5 = -0.009497136$	$d_5 = +0.001903218$
$a_6 = -3.050485660$	$b_6 = -0.138341947$	$c_6 = +0.011948809$	$d_6 = -0.017122914$
$a_7 = -0.075752419$	$b_7 = -1.363729124$	$c_7 = -0.006748873$	$d_7 = +0.029064067$
$a_8 = +0.850663781$	$b_8 = -0.403349276$	$c_8 = +0.000246420$	$d_8 = -0.027928955$
$a_9 = -0.025639041$	$b_9 = +0.702222016$	$c_9 = +0.002102967$	$d_9 = +0.016497308$
$a_{10} = -0.150230960$	$b_{10} = -0.216195929$	$c_{10} = -0.001217930$	$d_{10} = -0.005598515$
$a_{11} = +0.034404779$	$b_{11} = +0.019547031$	$c_{11} = +0.000233939$	$d_{11} = +0.000838386$

$C(v)$ and $S(v)$ may be evaluated for negative values of v by noting that:

$$C(-v) = -C(v) \quad (10a)$$

$$S(-v) = -S(v) \quad (10b)$$

3 Diffraction over a spherical Earth

The additional transmission loss due to diffraction over a spherical Earth can be computed by the classical residue series formula. A computer program GRWAVE, available from the ITU, provides the complete method. A subset of the outputs from this program (for antennas close to the ground and at lower frequencies) is presented in Recommendation ITU-R P.368.

The following subsections describe numerical and nomogram methods which may be used for frequencies 10 MHz and above. For frequencies below 10 MHz, GRWAVE should always be used. Section 3.1 gives methods for over-the-horizon paths. Section 3.1.1 is a numerical method. Section 3.1.2 is a nomogram method. Section 3.2 is a method applicable for the smooth earth case for any distance and for frequencies 10 MHz and above. This utilizes the numerical method in § 3.1.1.

3.1 Diffraction loss for over-the-horizon paths

At long distances over the horizon, only the first term of the residue series is important. Even near or at the horizon this approximation can be used with a maximum error around 2 dB in most cases.

This first term can be written as the product of a distance term, F , and two height gain terms, G_T and G_R . Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 describe how these terms can be obtained from simple formula or from nomograms.

3.1.1 Numerical calculation

3.1.1.1 Influence of the electrical characteristics of the surface of the Earth

The extent to which the electrical characteristics of the surface of the Earth influence the diffraction loss can be determined by calculating a normalized factor for surface admittance, K , given by the formulae:

in self-consistent units:

$$K_H = \left(\frac{2\pi a_e}{\lambda} \right)^{-1/3} \left[(\epsilon - 1)^2 + (60 \lambda \sigma)^2 \right]^{-1/4} \quad \text{for horizontal polarization} \quad (11)$$

and

$$K_V = K_H \left[\epsilon^2 + (60 \lambda \sigma)^2 \right]^{1/2} \quad \text{for vertical polarization} \quad (12)$$

or, in practical units:

$$K_H = 0.36 (a_e f)^{-1/3} \left[(\epsilon - 1)^2 + (18\,000 \sigma / f)^2 \right]^{-1/4} \quad (11a)$$

$$K_V = K_H \left[\epsilon^2 + (18\,000 \sigma / f)^2 \right]^{1/2} \quad (12a)$$

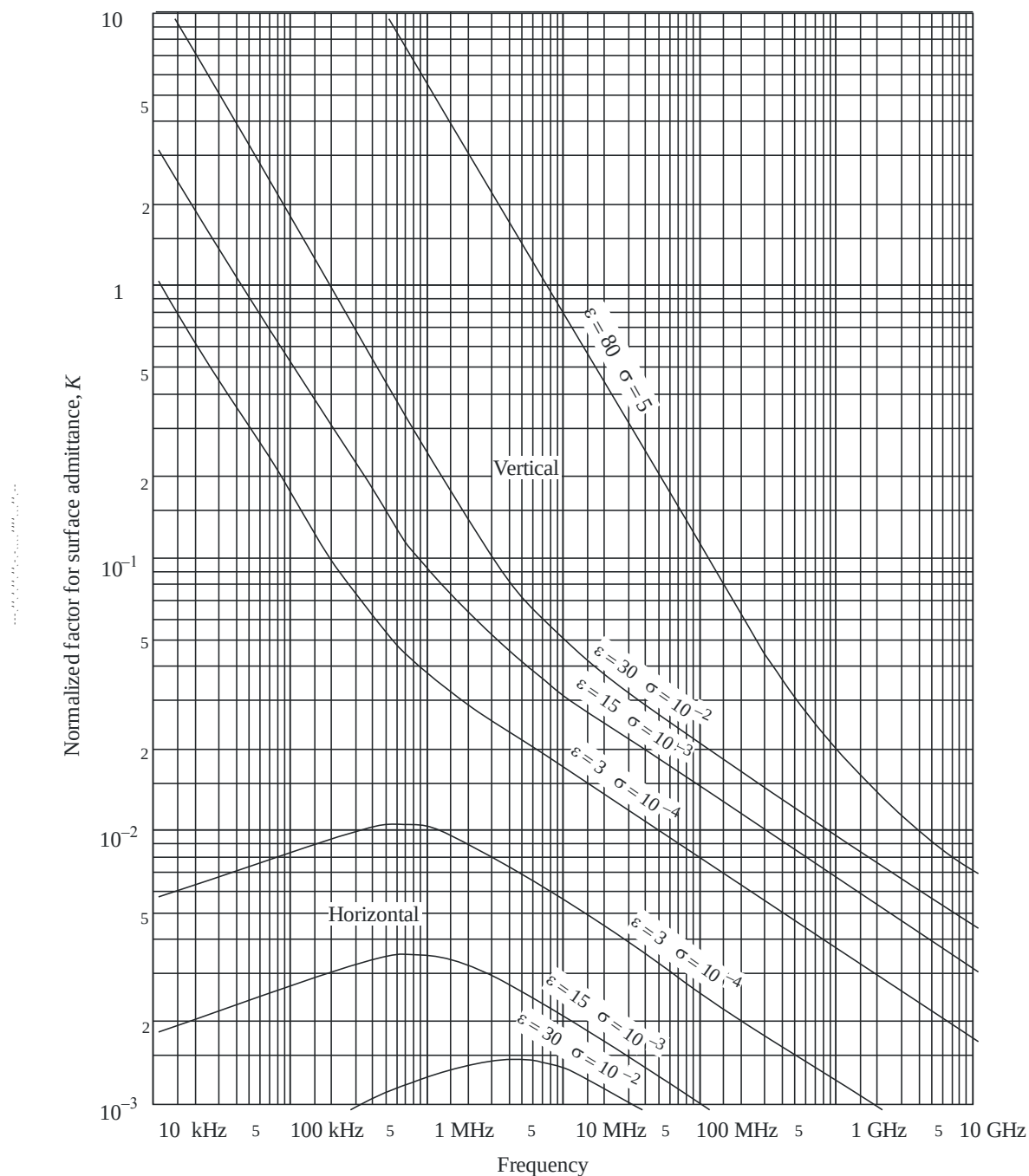
where:

a_e : effective radius of the Earth (km)

ε : effective relative permittivity
 σ : effective conductivity (S/m)
 f : frequency (MHz).

Typical values of K are shown in Fig. 2.

FIGURE 2
 Calculation of K



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If K is less than 0.001, the electrical characteristics of the Earth are not important. For values of K greater than 0.001 and less than 1, the appropriate formulae given in § 3.1.1.2 can be used. When K has a value greater than about 1, the diffraction field strength calculated using the method of § 3.1.1.2

differs from the results given by the computer program GRWAVE, and the difference increases rapidly as K increases. GRWAVE should be used for K greater than 1. This only occurs for vertical polarization, at frequencies below 10 MHz over sea, or below 200 kHz over land. In all other cases the method of § 3.1.1.2 is valid.

3.1.1.2 Diffraction field strength formulae

The diffraction field strength, E , relative to the free-space field strength, E_0 , is given by the formula:

$$20 \log \frac{E}{E_0} = F(X) + G(Y_1) + G(Y_2) \quad \text{dB} \quad (13)$$

where X is the normalized length of the path between the antennas at normalized heights Y_1 and Y_2 (and where $20 \log \frac{E}{E_0}$ is generally negative).

In self-consistent units:

$$X = \beta \left(\frac{\pi}{\lambda a_e^2} \right)^{1/3} d \quad (14)$$

$$Y = 2\beta \left(\frac{\pi^2}{\lambda^2 a_e} \right)^{1/3} h \quad (15)$$

or, in practical units:

$$X = 2.188 \beta f^{1/3} a_e^{-2/3} d \quad (14a)$$

$$Y = 9.575 \times 10^{-3} \beta f^{2/3} a_e^{-1/3} h \quad (15a)$$

where:

d : path length (km)

a_e : equivalent Earth's radius (km)

h : antenna height (m)

f : frequency (MHz).

β is a parameter allowing for the type of ground and for polarization. It is related to K by the following semi-empirical formula:

$$\beta = \frac{1 + 1.6 K^2 + 0.67 K^4}{1 + 4.5 K^2 + 1.53 K^4} \quad (16)$$

For horizontal polarization at all frequencies, and for vertical polarization above 20 MHz over land or 300 MHz over sea, β may be taken as equal to 1.

For vertical polarization below 20 MHz over land or 300 MHz over sea, β must be calculated as a function of K . However, it is then possible to disregard ϵ and write:

$$K^2 \approx 6.89 \frac{\sigma}{k^{2/3} f^{5/3}} \quad (16a)$$

where σ is expressed in S/m, f (MHz) and k is the multiplying factor of the Earth's radius.
The distance term is given by the formula:

$$F(X) = 11 + 10 \log(X) - 17.6 X \quad \text{for } X \geq 1.6 \quad (17a)$$

$$F(X) = -20 \log(X) - 5.6488X^{1.425} \quad \text{for } X < 1.6 \quad (17b)$$

The height gain term, $G(Y)$ is given by the following formulae:

$$G(Y) \cong 17.6(B-1.1)^{1/2} - 5 \log(B-1.1) - 8 \text{ for } B > 2 \quad (18)$$

$$G(Y) \cong 20 \log(B + 0.1B^3) \text{ for } B \leq 2 \quad (18a)$$

If $G(Y) < 2 + 20 \log K$, set $G(Y)$ to the value $2 + 20 \log K$

In the above:

$$B = \beta Y \quad (18b)$$

The accuracy of the diffracted field strength given by equation (13) is limited by the approximation inherent in only using the first term of the residue series. Equation (13) is accurate to better than 2 dB for values of X , Y_1 and Y_2 that are constrained by the formula:

$$X - (\beta Y_1)^{1/2} \Delta(Y_1, K) - (\beta Y_2)^{1/2} \Delta(Y_2, K) > X_{lim} \quad (19)$$

where:

$$X_{lim} = 1.096 - 1.280(1 - \beta) \quad (19a)$$

$$\Delta(Y, K) = \Delta(Y, 0) + 1.779(1 - \beta)[\Delta(Y, \infty) - \Delta(Y, 0)] \quad (19b)$$

$\Delta(Y, 0)$ and $\Delta(Y, \infty)$ are given by:

$$\Delta(Y, 0) = 0.5 \left[1 + \tanh \left(\frac{0.5 \log(\beta Y) - 0.255}{0.3} \right) \right] \quad (19c)$$

$$\Delta(Y, \infty) = 0.5 \left[1 + \tanh \left(\frac{0.5 \log(\beta Y) + 0.255}{0.25} \right) \right] \quad (19d)$$

Consequently, the minimum distance d_{min} for which equation (13) is valid is given by:

$$X_{min} = X_{lim} + (\beta Y_1)^{1/2} \Delta(Y_1, K) + (\beta Y_2)^{1/2} \Delta(Y_2, K) \quad (19e)$$

and d_{min} is obtained from X_{min} using equation (14a).

3.1.2 Calculation by nomograms

Under the same approximation condition (the first term of the residue series is dominant), the calculation may also be made using the following formula:

$$20 \log \frac{E}{E_0} = F(d) + H(h_1) + H(h_2) \quad \text{dB} \quad (20)$$

where:

E : received field strength

E_0 : field strength in free space at the same distance

d : distance between the extremities of the path

h_1 and h_2 : heights of the antennas above the spherical earth.

The function F (influence of the distance) and H (height-gain) are given by the nomograms in Figs 3, 4, 5 and 6.

These nomograms (Figs 3 to 6) give directly the received level relative to free space, for $k = 1$ and $k = 4/3$, and for frequencies greater than approximately 30 MHz. k is the effective Earth radius factor, defined in Recommendation ITU-R P.310. However, the received level for other values of k may be calculated by using the frequency scale for $k = 1$, but replacing the frequency in question by a hypothetical frequency equal to f/k^2 for Figs 3 and 5, and $f/\sqrt{k}$ for Figs 4 and 6.

Very close to the ground the field strength is practically independent of the height. This phenomenon is particularly important for vertical polarization over the sea. For this reason Fig. 6 includes a heavy black vertical line AB. If the straight line should intersect this heavy line AB, the real height should be replaced by a larger value, so that the straight line just touches the top of the limit line at A.

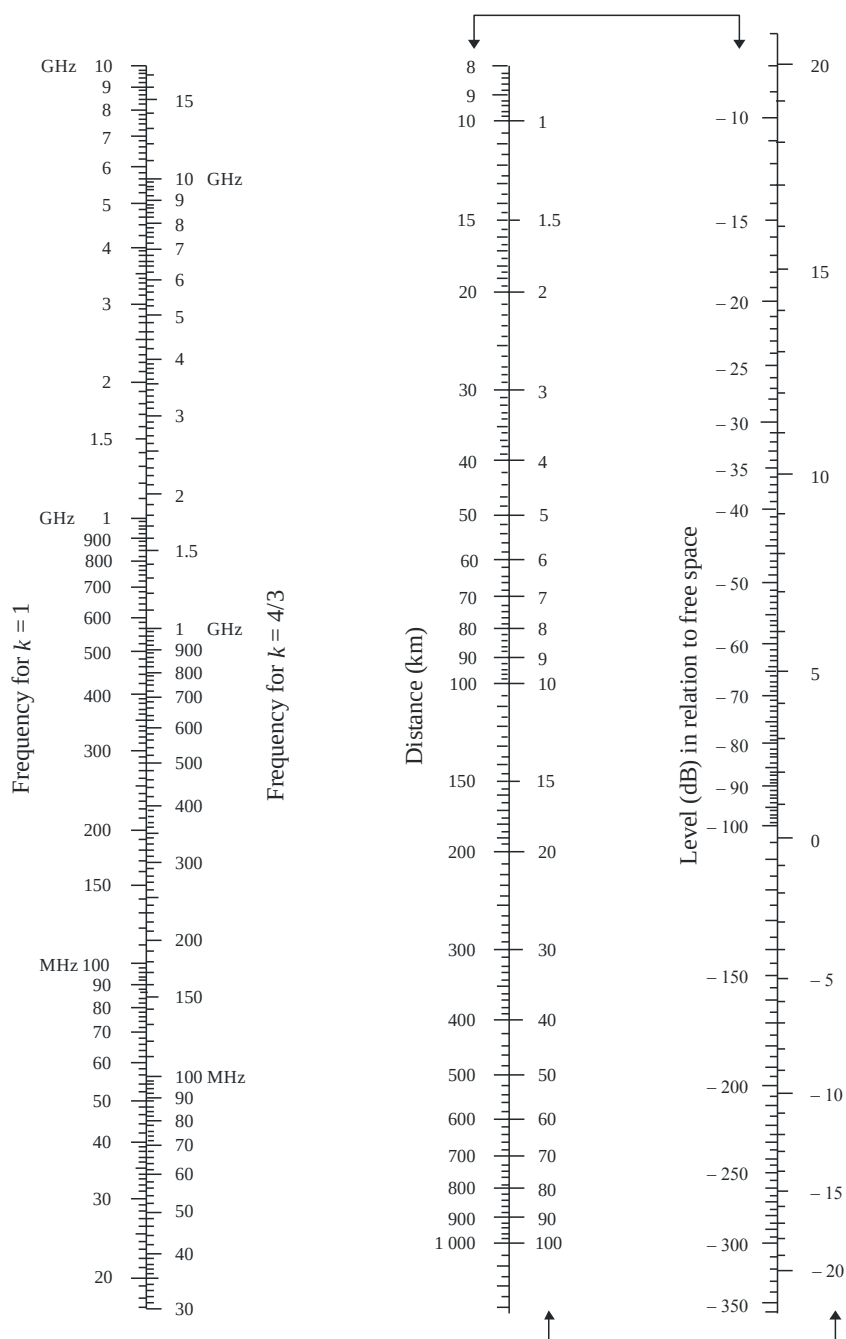
NOTE 1 – Attenuation relative to free space is given by the negative of the values given by equation (20). If equation (20) gives a value above the free-space field, the method is invalid.

NOTE 2 – The effect of line AB is included in the numerical method given in § 3.1.1.

Figure 3: Nomogram for the function F(d) (influence of distance) for k=1 and k=4/3.

FIGURE 3

Diffraction by a spherical Earth – effect of distance

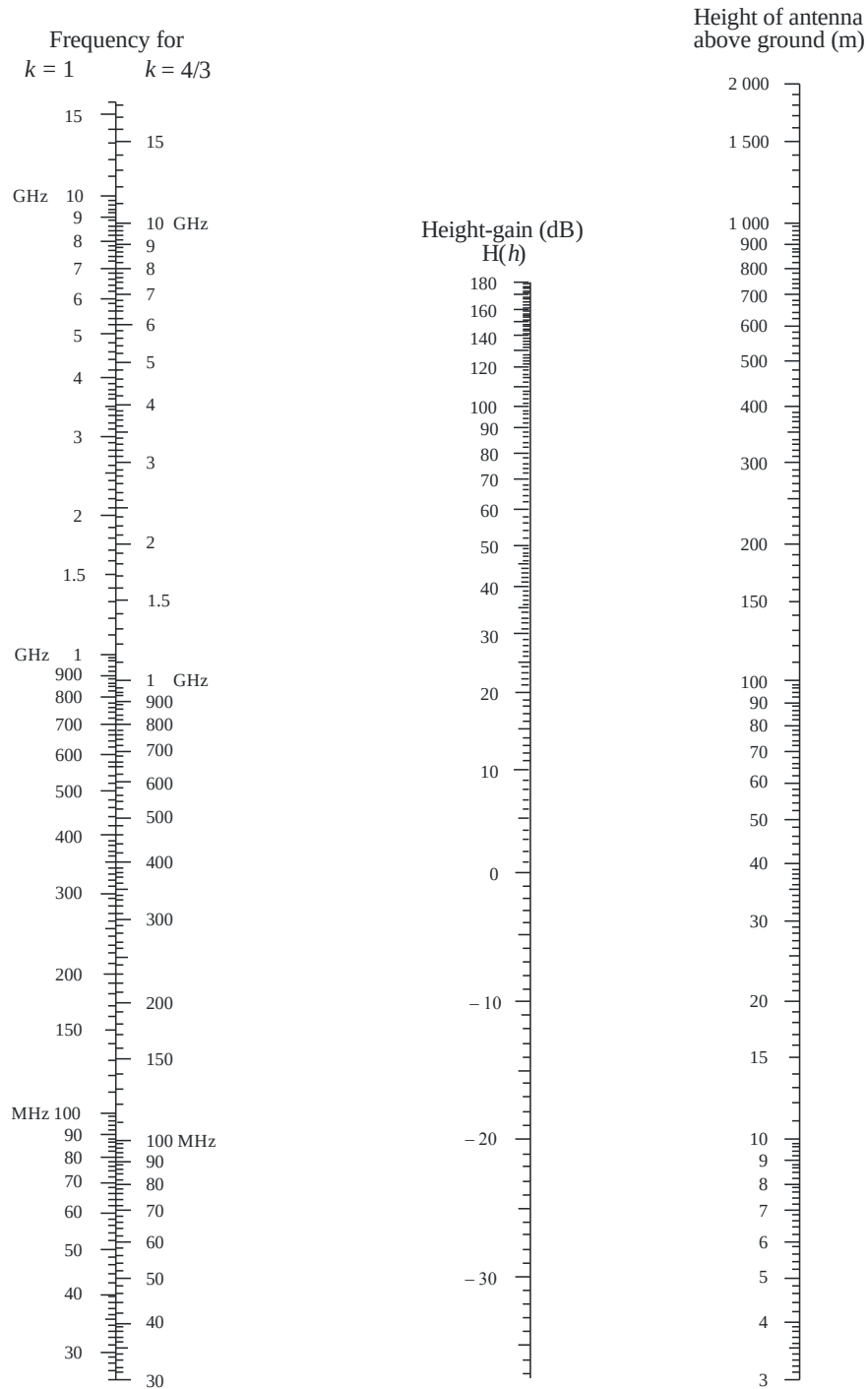


Horizontal polarization over land and sea
Vertical polarization over land

(The scales joined by arrows should be used together)

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FIGURE 4
Diffraction by a spherical Earth – height-gain

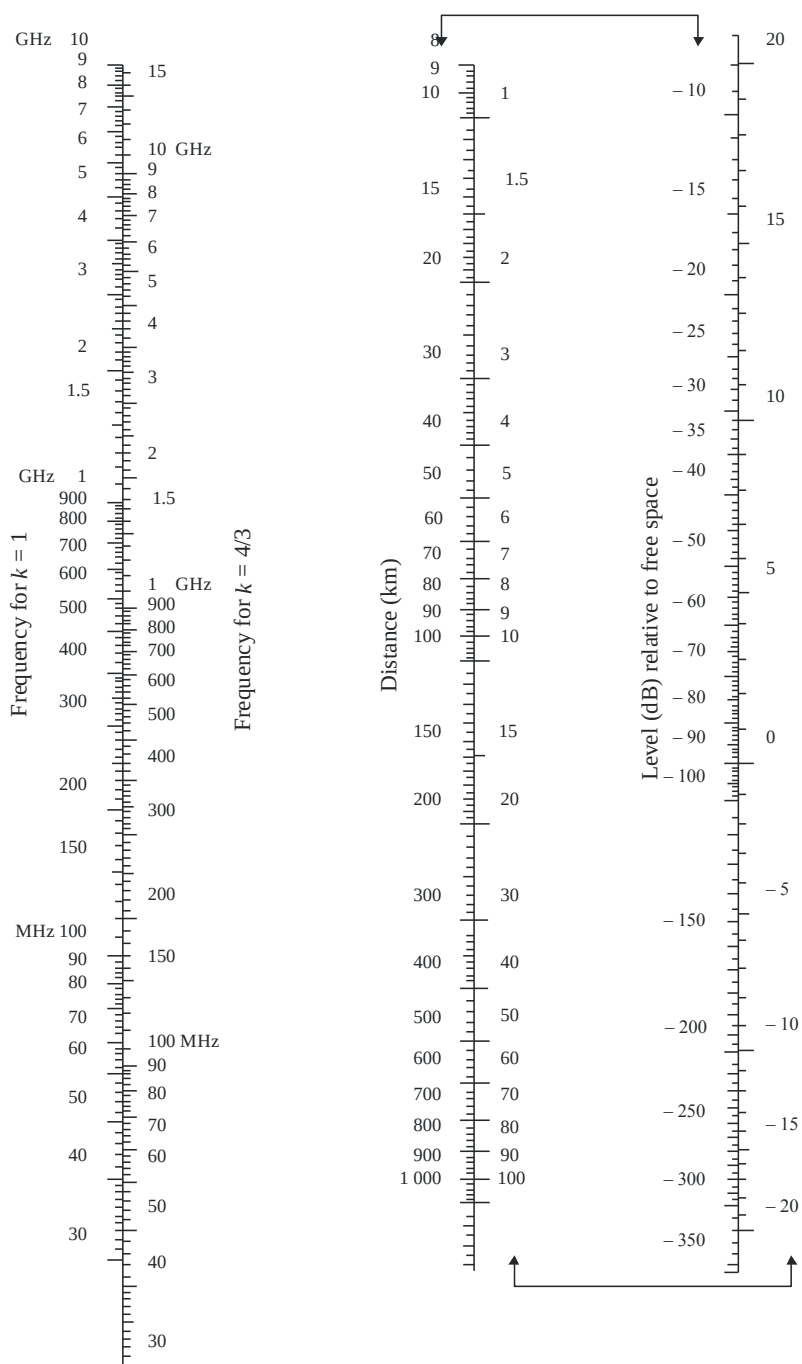


Horizontal polarization – land and sea
Vertical polarization – land

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FIGURE 5

Diffraction by a spherical Earth – effect of distance



Vertical polarization over sea
(The scales joined by arrows should be used together)

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