

SCENT-FREE WORKPLACES

Background

The Division believes everyone has the right to a safe workplace per the Occupational Health and Safety Act. To maintain a safe learning environment for students and a safe work environment for staff, the Division intends to protect the indoor air quality of its buildings. Strong scents and fragrances can contribute to poor air quality that can be unhealthy for students, staff, and guests in division buildings and schools, as well as those owned or leased. This will be accomplished by eliminating or minimizing, as much as possible, the use of products and fragrances whose scent or other properties are known to trigger asthma attacks, migraine headaches, severe allergic reactions, inability to concentrate, loss of coordination, loss of consciousness or seizures.

Definitions

1. "Scents" often mean the smells or odours from ingredients and chemicals in personal hygiene products (including, but not limited to, perfume, make-up, shampoo, deodorant, etc.) or from other products such as air fresheners, cleaners, etc.
2. There is no exact definition for "scent-free," "fragrance-free," or "unscented". Products labelled as "unscented" may contain ingredients that mask or hide the smell of other ingredients.

Procedures

1. All staff, students, parents and visitors will avoid using personal products containing strong fragrances which are known to trigger adverse physical reactions such as respiratory distress and/or headaches. This includes but is not limited to cosmetics, hair styling products, antiperspirants, deodorants, cologne, hair spray, perfume, after-shave, and body washes. Other environmental products in the workplace that may trigger reactions include, but are not limited to, diffusers and essential oils, deodorizers, and soaps with fragrance. All students, staff, parents, and visitors are asked to refrain from using these and similar products in the workplace.
2. Students, staff or visitors affected by persons using products that trigger sensitivities shall take reasonable precautions to self-manage their conditions. They will advise the principal/manager/supervisor if they are affected by environmental sensitivities.
3. Where specific products are necessary for proper cleaning/disinfecting and the proper maintenance and upkeep of the facility, the Division will make every effort possible to select unscented products where available. Where that is not possible, the Division will endeavour to select products that use the lowest possible scent levels and/or contain scents that are least likely to have irritant properties. In all cases, choices will be made in a manner that continues to achieve the intended purpose.
4. Facilities or Custodial staff who plan to utilize a known scented product due to the unavailability of an alternate scent-free/reduced product (e.g. painting, stripping, burnishing, or polishing floors, etc.) shall provide advance notice of affected areas to inform staff, in advance, of the potential for exposure to scented products. Those susceptible to an adverse reaction related to such products are expected to take appropriate precautions not to place themselves in jeopardy, with assistance from their administrative team, as needed.

5. This procedure does not apply to scents, smells or odours resulting from or associated with culturally responsive activities/ceremonies.
6. Principals/managers/supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all reasonable steps are taken to make the work/school environment safe for those with chemical sensitivities in the same manner that any other health issue or safety hazard is addressed (including consideration of ventilation options). In the interest of creating and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment, this procedure will assist principals/managers/supervisors in implementing a scent-free workplace.

Reference: Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Act
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety [CCOHS]

Related APs: Healthy Schools and Worksites (AP 160)