

Scent Safety in the Workplace



Policy

WorkSafeBC is committed to eliminating health concerns arising from exposure to scented products by maintaining a scent-safe environment for all employees and visitors within WorkSafeBC premises. All employees and visitors will refrain from using or wearing scented products at WorkSafeBC facilities.

Purpose

To ensure the health and well-being of employees at WorkSafeBC facilities by preventing exposure to scented products that can cause environmental chemical sensitivities. The goals of this policy are to:

- **Eliminate** the use of perfume, cologne/aftershave, scented air fresheners, scented candles and potpourri from the workplace;
- **Eliminate** the use of heavily scented personal hygiene products such as hair products, lotions/creams and deodorant;
- **Reduce** heavily scented flowers in the workplace such as Lilacs, Hyacinth, Flowering broom etc.

General Information

Exposure to scented products can adversely affect a person's health. In sufficient concentrations scented products may trigger responses to those with allergies or chemical sensitivities. Allergic and asthmatic people, as well as those with other conditions, report that exposure to scented products, even in the smallest amounts, can trigger response. Reported symptoms can include, but are not limited to:

- Headaches, migraines
- Dizziness, lightheadedness
- Weakness
- Confusion
- Numbness
- Upper respiratory symptoms
- Skin irritation
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Malaise
- Anxiety
- Difficulty with concentration
- Sinus congestion
- Loss of appetite

The severity of these symptoms can vary. Some may only experience mild irritation while others can be incapacitated.

Scented Product Categories

Personal Products

Hygiene: Products include, but are not limited to, cosmetics, perfumes, colognes, after-shave and scented shaving creams, deodorant, shampoo/conditions, hair spray, lotions and creams.

Non Hygiene: Products include, but are not limited to, scented candles, potpourri and scented ornaments.

Non Personal Products

Products with a distinct scent or fragrance and include scented household/ industrial cleaning products, air fresheners, deodorizers, building materials (e.g. paint) and some types of flowers.

Responsibilities

Senior Management

- Support managers, employees, and Joint Health and Safety Committee in implementing a scent-safe workplace.
- Enforce compliance with maintaining a scent-safe environment.

Managers/Supervisors

- Arrange pertinent awareness, education, and training for employees regarding a scent-safe workplace. Ensure employees have been trained on:
 - WorkSafeBC policy *HEA1-9 Scent Safety in the Workplace*
 - Types of scented personal/non personal products
 - How to report an unsafe act or condition
 - How to seek first aid
- Ensure employees use scent-free products.
- Ensure that materials and other resources required to maintain a scent-safe environment are readily available (i.e., posted signs, promotional materials, presentations, etc). Contact Safety, Health and Wellness for assistance.
- Conduct a scent safety presentation, at least once every two years, during monthly staff safety meetings.
- Inform visitors of this policy before they visit any WorkSafeBC facility.

Safety, Health & Wellness

- Develop and maintain an effective scent-safe workplace policy.
- Develop any required educational materials, signs, and/or promotional materials
- Assist in educating employees on the effects of scented products and what are suitable alternatives.

Facilities

- Ensure that any products used for construction, maintenance, and cleaning are scent-free, where possible.
- Inform contractors of this policy before they visit any WorkSafeBC facility.
- Notify appropriate personnel when work is to take place that may involve the use of scented products, or products that contain an odor that may affect the health of staff. Sufficient advance warning should be given to allow employee accommodation to take place, if necessary.

Joint Health and Safety Committee

- Promote employee education in the use and effects of scented products.
- Support managers in maintaining a scent-safe workplace.

Employees

- Do not use or bring scented personal and/or non personal products to WorkSafeBC workplaces.
- Participate in scent safety awareness, education, and training.
- Follow *HEA 1-9 Scent Safety in the Workplace* policy and established procedures.
- Report any unsafe conditions or acts to your manager in accordance with *SAF 2-1 Hazard Reporting*.

Materials

- *SAF 2-1 Hazard Reporting*

References

- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (www.ccohs.ca)
- British Columbia Lung Association (www.bc.lung.ca)
- Canadian Health Network (www.canadian-health-network.ca)
- Guide to Less Toxic Products (www.lesstoxicguide.ca)

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