



AP 1 - 32 Scents in the Workplace

Related Policies:	Initial Approval: March 14, 2025
Related Procedures:	Last Amended:
Exhibits: Exhibit 1: Initial Memo to Staff	Last Reviewed:

PURPOSE

The Chinook's Edge School Division, as an employer, has a duty to accommodate employees who may be adversely affected, or suffer a severe medical reaction, when exposed to a fragrance or scented products. Principals/non-school-based department heads have a responsibility to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to make the working environment safe for those with chemical sensitivities in the same manner that any other health issue or safety hazard is addressed.

In the interest of creating and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment for employees, this procedure has been developed to assist principals/non-school-based supervisors with implementing a fragrance/scent-safe workplace or **when** made aware that an employee is experiencing an adverse reaction to fragrances/scents in their work environment.

SCOPE

This procedure applies to all work sites, buildings, and schools, owned by the Chinook's Edge School Division. It is applicable to all employees, students, volunteers, and contractors, as well as to visitors.

BACKGROUND

Exposure to fragrances/scents found in personal care products, cleaning products, perfumes/cologne, diffusers, essential oils, plug-ins and construction and maintenance products, can create significant health problems in susceptible individuals including asthma attacks, migraine headaches, severe allergic reactions, inability to concentrate, loss of coordination, loss of consciousness or seizures.

DEFINITIONS

- Scent-free product: a product labeled unscented, scent-free, or fragrance-free by the manufacturer.
- Scent-reduced product: a product having minimal scent, labeled hypo-allergenic or for sensitive skin.
- Scent/fragrance: a chemical or additive that creates an aroma or odor. These are found in a wide range of common products including perfume, aftershave, deodorant, soap, air fresheners, diffusers, essential oils plug-ins, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, facial tissues, candles, and maintenance products.

Procedure for Responding to Fragrance/Scents Concerns

A principal/non-school-based supervisor is responsible for initiating the informal process when notified by an employee, either verbally or in writing of a concern related to scents/fragrances and/or construction and maintenance products. While it may be required at some point that the employee provide supporting medical documentation in respect to the causes and symptoms of their issue, the absence of such does not remove the need for an immediate response.

Principal/Non-School-Based Department head Responsibilities

Informal Process

1. Meet with the individual to clarify the issue, to understand the impact that the fragrance/scent is having on their health and the actions that they are taking to address their problem.
2. In a timely manner, develop a fragrance/scent-safe workplace plan.

(Note - the workplace plan does not need to be complicated. It could be as simple as asking staff to refrain from wearing colognes/perfumes while at work or requesting employees to refrain from bringing air fresheners or cleaning products into the workplace.)

3. Communicate with staff and students, highlighting the key points of the plan, and requesting everyone's cooperation and understanding to create a safe environment for all.
4. Continue to monitor the situation both in terms of the employee's health and the implementation of the plan.
5. If the principal/non-school-based supervisor does not receive the necessary cooperation, and/or the situation is not resolved by the informal steps, it may be necessary to initiate the formal process (see below).

Formal Process

1. The principal / non-school based supervisor will meet with the employee to discuss next steps, including consultation with the Health & Safety Coordinator where applicable, and the requirement for medical documentation. This is necessary in order to develop an official fragrance/scent-safe accommodation plan.
2. The Health & Safety Coordinator will facilitate the development of a medical accommodation plan that will identify the necessary actions and outline the responsibilities of the principal/non-school-based supervisor/employee/superintendent to establish and maintain a fragrance/scent-safe workplace. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - Installing signage indicating that this workplace is a fragrance/scent-safe environment (front door, side entrance, etc.).
 - Posting the Administrative Procedure AP 1-32 Scents in the Workplace
 - For meetings held in enclosed rooms (within or outside of the school premises), advise attendees in advance that it will be a fragrance/scent-safe environment and to refrain from wearing any perfume/cologne or scent producing products.
 - Reminder messages, initiated by the school, for parent teacher interview night, school website, district web page, school newsletter (minimum one per term), and community use of schools.
3. Share the mandatory requirements of the workplace plan with staff, students and others who must comply with the expectations. Reinforce the need for cooperation, to ensure that the goal of a healthy and safe workplace is attained.
4. Continue to monitor the situation both in terms of the employee's health and in the implementation of the plan.
5. If compliance with a fragrance/scent-safe workplace does not occur at this level, contact the school's Liaison Superintendent for support in addressing the issue.

Exhibit 1: Initial Memo to Staff

Dear Staff:

Please be aware that we have received a request to establish a fragrance/scent-safe workplace due to medical reasons. We ask that you review the following information and respond as requested. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

What is the issue?

Exposure to fragrances and scented products can trigger serious health reactions in individuals with asthma, allergies, migraines, or chemical sensitivities.

Fragrances and scents are found in a wide range of products including perfume, aftershave, deodorant, soap, diffusers, plug-ins, air fresheners, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, facial tissues, and candles.

It is a personal choice to use fragrances or scents: however, it is important to recognize that the chemicals from which these are created are, by their very nature, shared. The chemicals vaporize into the air and are easily inhaled by those around us. Today's fragrances/scented products are made up of a complex mixture of chemicals which can contribute to indoor air quality problems and cause health problems.

Susceptible individuals can experience a variety of symptoms including headache, sore throat, runny nose, sinus congestion, wheezing, as well as shortness of breath, dizziness, anxiety, anger, nausea, fatigue, mental confusion, and an inability to concentrate. Although the mechanisms by which chemicals act to produce symptoms are not yet understood, the impact on all those affected can be quite severe, resulting in great difficulty in work and study activities.

Moving toward a fragrance/scent-safe environment

Recognizing that fragrances and scents may negatively impact on indoor air quality, the division will:

- Minimize the use of products which contain fragrances and scents.
- Promote the use of environmentally-friendly products in cleaning and building materials.
- Optimize air quality by means of proper ventilation, as well as ensuring peak performance and proper maintenance of building ventilation systems.

What can you do to help?

- Be considerate of those who are sensitive to fragrances and scents. Avoid using these products in the workplace.
- If you must use a fragrance or scented products please use it sparingly. A general guideline for fragrances and scented products is that they should not be detectable more than an arm's length away.
- Avoid using products such as air fresheners, diffusers or plug-ins in your work area.
- If possible, avoid using scented laundry products or cleaning agents. Allow dry cleaned clothing to be aired out prior to wearing.
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What should you do if you are approached because you are using a fragrance or wearing a scented product?

If you are informed that the fragrance that you are using or wearing is creating a health problem and you are requested to refrain from using the product while at work, you may feel puzzled, hurt, annoyed, defensive, or

even insulted by the request. Understand that it is not about you as a person or about your choice of fragrance or scent, but it is about the product and the adverse effect it is having on someone.

- Consider discussing the issue with the person or with your supervisor and the person. Ask questions about the health impact on the person and the types of symptoms experienced.
- Work with cooperation and understanding towards a mutual, satisfactory resolution.

What should I do if you encounter a person in the school who is either wearing a fragrance or using scented products?

- If you feel you can do so comfortably, approach the individual and let them know that the fragrance or scent may cause an adverse reaction to some individuals in the workplace. Talk to the individual in a cordial and respectful manner, requesting their understanding and cooperation. Remember that many people are unaware of the potential adverse health effects caused by the wearing or use of fragrances or scented products.
- As an employee, you may ask your supervisor/principal to discuss this matter with the individual involved or with the group of employees.

Thank you for your attention regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Principal,
School

REFERENCE AND LINKS

HISTORY