Winnipeg

Scents in the Workplace

Scents contain chemicals which can affect some people's health. People with fragrance sensitivities, asthma, allergies and various other medical conditions can have a worsening of symptoms related to scents (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety).

What are Scents?

Scents can be any of the following fragrances, aromas or perfumes:

Perfumes	Aftershave	Soaps
Adhesives	Caulking	Deodorizers
Deodorants	Colognes	Shampoos
Conditioners	Air Fresheners	Body Lotions
Laundry Detergents	Cleaning Products	Fabric Softeners

Anything that will add a smell to a product is considered a scent (Canadian Lung Association).

How do Scented Products affect my health?

The chemicals that are used to add scent to a product can cause many different reactions. For some, it can cause serious health problems. The Canadian Lung Association indicates that if a scented product is present, 72% of people with asthma will have decreased lung function.

Symptoms can be debilitating to some people.

Common symptoms:
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Difficulty breathing/coughing
- Nausea
- Sinus congestion
- Irritated eyes
- Sore throat

Severe symptoms:
- Increased asthma symptoms
- Feeling anxious or depressed
- Decreased concentration
- Loss of appetite
- Seizures
- Muscle pain
- Numbness

How can you help to reduce your use of scents?

- Whenever possible, use only fragrance free or unscented products;
- Be aware of your cleaning products & laundry detergents
- Avoid air fresheners in the workplace
- Post signs in workplace encouraging employees to reduce the use of scents

Why is it important to reduce scent in your Workplace?

Scent sensitivity is a serious concern that can lead to use of sick time and loss of productivity (Canadian Lung Association).

The Manitoba Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and those with scent sensitivities are entitled to be reasonably accommodated.

As an employer and/or service provider, the City of Winnipeg is obligated to reasonability accommodate requests related to scent sensitivities.

What can you do if a scent is bothering you?

- Talk to the person who is wearing the scent to make them aware they are wearing a scent that is affecting you;
- Talk to your supervisor about your concern if you cannot address it yourself;
- Talk to your supervisor about what can be done to limit your exposure to scents in the workplace;
- Post “Reduced scent zone” posters.

References:
- University of Manitoba – Info Safety Bulletins “Scents” in the Workplace
- Work Safe BC Scent Safety in the Workplace
- Canadian Lung Association
- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)
- Manitoba Human Rights Code

For more information, contact your supervisor or human resources representative if you are an employee. If you are a supervisor or HR representative, contact Occupational Health Services at 204-986-5218.

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