



Scented Products Guidelines

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1. Purpose

OCAD University ("OCAD U" or "the University") strives to provide an indoor environment that supports the University community at work and study. This guideline is intended to raise awareness of the effects of scented products on some individuals, as well as to provide best practices for the management of scent-related complaints and concerns.

2. Scope:

For the general population, exposure to scents is not typically problematic. However, on occasion the presence of perfumes and other scented products can present indoor air quality concerns that may affect an individual's comfort. In some cases, scented products may present a risk of health hazard. For people with pre-existing conditions such as asthma or allergies, chemical sensitivities or sensitizations, exposure to some odours can cause a range of ill health effects such as headaches, migraines, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, insomnia, confusion, loss of appetite, depression, anxiety, numbness, upper respiratory symptoms, shortness of breath, difficulty with concentration and/or skill irritation. When exposure is indoors, the impact is magnified.

Scented products commonly include the following:

- Person hygiene products (e.g. shampoo, conditioner, hairsprays, deodorants, colognes, after-shaves, fragrances, perfumes, lotions, soaps, cosmetics and creams);
- Industrial and household chemicals and cleaners;
- Air fresheners (e.g. deodorizers, potpourri, oils and candles); and
- Various household products.

3. Guidelines

Raising scent-awareness on campus:

Employees, students, volunteers and visitors will be informed of these guidelines through signs posted in buildings and website information.

What to do is a co-worker is wearing a scented product that is causing problems

The employee should first discuss the situation with their Supervisor. The employee may be advised to approach the scent-wearing individual in a cordial and respectful manner and let them know how scents affect their health. The employee may share any supportive reference documents. The employee should seek the co-worker's cooperation and understand and suggest they consider using an unscented product. If the individual requests additional documentation, the employee should refer them to the Risk Management Office.

What a Supervisor will do when a complaint about a scented product is received

The Supervisor will ask the employee how exactly the scented product affects them. The employee should be as specific as possible regarding their symptoms, i.e. headache, other, and explain what he/she is doing to relieve the symptoms, what works and when the symptoms clear up. The Supervisor will make notes about the employee concerns; an Injury Report may be filed. Guidance may be obtained from Risk Management and/or Human Resources.

The Supervisor will then discuss the employee's concerns in a respectful manner with the scent-wearing person involved and explain the health concerns.

What happens when the scented product continues to be worn, even after the Supervisor has had the discussion with the person wearing the scented product

The Supervisor will respond to each situation based on the specific circumstances involved and will attempt to resolve the issue in a way that is respectful of the feelings and dignity of all concerned. However, the Supervisor's response will be guided by their responsibility to provide all members of the community with a safe environment which does not compromise the health or well being of any individual.

What to do if you are approached about the scented product you are wearing

The goal of this awareness campaign is to assist those whose health and well-being are affected by scented products, not to target people personally or to criticize personal preferences. Persons wearing scent may feel surprised and taken aback. All parties are encouraged to communicate in a collegial and non-defensive way and each resolution in a cooperative manner. Questions to explore may include: is it the amount or the type causing the effects?

References:

1. Carleton University – Scented Products Guideline
2. McMaster University – Scent-Aware Guideline
3. Wilfrid Laurier University – Bulletin on Wearing Scented Products
4. York University – Guidelines – Scented Products