



## **SCENT AWARENESS GUIDELINES**

### 1. **Purpose**

The Simcoe County District School Board is committed to a safe, healthy and respectful workplace and learning environment for staff, students, and all other persons who are invited to or who work on Board property.

This guideline is intended to:

- 1.1 increase the awareness within the Board community about the potential impact of fragrance chemicals on the health, wellbeing, productivity and lifestyle of those affected;
- 1.2 ask for the voluntary cooperation towards a scent-reduced environment;
- 1.3 provide the steps for responding to scent-related issues.

### 2. **What is the Issue?**

Fifteen to twenty percent of the Canadian population have respiratory issues, such as asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, and allergies. Several hundred chemicals can be used to make one scented product. Fragrances are found in a wide range of products. Common scented products include perfume, cologne, aftershave, deodorant, soap, shampoo, hairspray, body spray, lotions, creams, hand sanitizers, makeup and powders. Examples of other products with added scents include air fresheners, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, cleaners, carpet deodorizers, facial tissues, candles, laminators, markers, paints, solvents and liquid white out.

Reactions/symptoms associated with these products may include:

- shortness of breath/wheezing
- difficulty in swallowing
- headaches/migraines
- seizures
- short-term memory loss
- inability to concentrate
- lethargy/fatigue
- anxiety
- irritability
- depression/mood swings
- restlessness
- rashes/hives/eczema
- irregular heart beat
- numbness/muscle pain/weakness
- asthma/sneezing/nasal congestion
- hypertension
- swollen lymph glands
- insomnia
- nausea/loss of appetite
- watery or dry eyes/double vision
- sinusitis
- coughing/bronchitis
- tinnitus (ear ringing/buzzing)/ear pain
- dizziness/vertigo
- anaphylaxis (life threatening allergy)
- confusion/disorientation/incoherence

A person's reaction is not to you personally, but to one or more of the hundreds of chemicals that are present in your perfume, deodorant, hairspray etc.

### 3. **Working Towards a Scent-Reduced Environment**

In order to protect those individuals with fragrance sensitivities and to possibly prevent others from developing such sensitivities, the Board is asking for voluntary cooperation towards a scent-reduced environment. Staff, students and all other persons who are invited to or who work on Board property are strongly encouraged to avoid or reduce the use of fragranced products, and to replace them with unscented alternatives. This is a request to voluntarily reduce the use of chemical-based scented products, and not a ban on scented products.

### 4. **Board Responsibilities**

Recognizing that chemicals, including fragrance chemicals, can negatively impact on indoor air quality, the Board will strive to:

- 4.1 Promote the reduction of unnecessary use of chemicals, including fragrance chemicals;
- 4.2 Promote the use of environmentally-friendly and the least harmful products in school programs, cleaning materials, and building materials;
- 4.3 Support the best possible air quality, by means of proper ventilation and maintenance of building mechanical ventilation systems;
- 4.4 Develop information and training to promote the above to the Board community.

### 5. **School Community (Staff, Students, Parents) Responsibilities**

Be considerate of those who are sensitive to fragrance chemicals. Avoid using scented products; instead, use scent-reduced alternatives. If you do use scented products, use them sparingly. A general guideline for scented products is that the scent should not be detectable more than an arm's length away from you. Do not apply scented products in a public area. Avoid using products (e.g. air fresheners or potpourri) that give off chemical-based scents in your work area. Avoid using laundry products or cleaning agents that are scented. Air out dry-cleaned clothing before wearing.

### 6. **Individual Responsibilities**

If you feel you can do so comfortably, approach the scented individual and let them know how you react to fragrances. Be specific about the types of physical reactions you have (e.g. asthma attacks, migraines, shortness of breath). Talk to the individual in a cordial and respectful manner. Ask for their understanding and cooperation. Many people are unaware of the potential health effects of fragrance chemicals. Inform your supervisor of your sensitivities, your symptoms, and the types of exposures that improve or worsen these symptoms. Ask them to assist in finding a solution to your situation. You may ask your supervisor to discuss this matter with the individual involved or with the group of employees. If an individual or your supervisor informs you that the fragranced products that you use or wear are a problem and request that you avoid using them, 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, but it is about the chemicals in the fragranced product. Do not discount the issue as ridiculous and unreasonable.

**7. Supervisor Responsibilities**

If an individual in your work area or classroom is adversely affected by scented products:

- 7.1 Listen to and document the person's concerns;
- 7.2 Clarify the issue. Ask the individual to describe their health effect, the factors that make the problem better or worse, and the actions they are taking to deal with it;
- 7.3 Investigate the issue and use good judgment and consideration to provide a fair, uniform and timely resolution;
- 7.4 Discuss the issue with your staff or students in an open and non-threatening manner. Inform them of the health concerns that have arisen as a result of the use of scented products in the workplace. You may choose to have this discussion with an individual or an entire group, whichever is appropriate to the situation;
- 7.5 Request everyone's cooperation and understanding to voluntarily avoid the use of scented products in the area. Discuss the benefits of a scent-reduced work area;
- 7.6 Implement measures to reasonably accommodate those who are affected by scented products. Where employees are severely limited due to exposure to scented products, you may need to establish a fragrance-free zone. For meetings held in enclosed rooms, you may need to send out notices to attendees informing them of the scent-reduced nature of the meeting;
- 7.7 Consult with Facility Services regarding the adequacy of ventilation in the area;
- 7.8 Promote the information in this guideline. An information poster "Be Scentsitive to Others" may be displayed to assist in achieving scent awareness. Copies of the poster are available through Human Resource Services – Health and Safety.

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**First Issued:** October 2008

**Reference:**

**Contact:** Human Resource Services  
Department – Health and Safety



# Be Scentsitive to others

Please help to achieve a scent-reduced environment and avoid the use of scented products.



Simcoe County  
District School Board

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Share<sup>the</sup>  
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