



# CORPORATE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

<i>Reviewed:</i>	
<i>JOHSC</i>	January 8, 2014
<i>MCC</i>	N/A
<i>SMT</i>	February 12, 2014

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<b>SECTION:</b>	OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY	<b>POLICY NO.:</b>	OHS-11-34
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>Scent Safe Workplace</b>		
<b>POLICY OWNER:</b>	<b>Manager, Human Resources</b>		
<b>APPROVED BY:</b>	Senior Management	<b>DATE:</b>	February 12, 2014
<b>SUPERSEDES:</b>	March 2012	<b>LAST REVIEW:</b>	January 8, 2014

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## 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) is dedicated to providing a healthy and safe environment for our staff, students, volunteers, clients and visitors.
- 1.2 Scented products can cause a variety of health problems including, but not limited to: sore throat, runny nose, sinus congestion, wheezing, shortness of breath, headaches, dizziness, anxiety, anger, fatigue, mental confusion, inability to concentrate, irritability, seizures, nausea and muscle pain. Strongly scented products can trigger migraines. The ventilation systems of many buildings are not able to extract all chemicals from the air and instead re-circulate them.
- 1.3 Section 25(2) (h) of the Occupational Health & Safety Act requires that the employer take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker. This regulation requires the employer to limit the exposure of workers to chemical substances.
- 1.4 The purpose of this policy is to establish a procedure to deal with issues that may arise when staff, students, or volunteers show adverse symptoms from exposure to scented or fragrant products in the workplace.

## 2. POLICY

- 2.1 It is the policy of the TBDHU to create a healthy and safe environment for staff, students, and volunteers through providing a scent safe workplace.
- 2.2 Scented and fragrant products are not to be worn or used in the workplace.
- 2.3 The Health Unit reserves the right to require an employee, student or volunteer to discontinue the use of a particular scented or fragrant product in order to accommodate another employee's sensitivity.
- 2.4 The TBDHU will endeavour to use unscented cleaning products, where possible. Where not possible, the scented product will only be used in places or at times where it is unlikely that employees, students or volunteers will be exposed to the product's scent.

### 3. PROCEDURE

#### Employees

- 3.1 Employees with scent sensitivities must inform their manager of their particular sensitivity to ensure that proper precautions and accommodations are in place to reduce the likelihood of exposure.
- 3.2 Employees with concerns about scents or fragrances associated with products used in the workplace should contact their manager to determine if an appropriate product substitution is available.
- 3.3 Where possible, the source of a scent or fragrance used in the workplace will be removed. If the source cannot be removed, an affected employee may have to be accommodated.
- 3.4 An employee who experiences a *minor* reaction from a product worn by another employee should:
  - 1) Attempt to resolve the issue by communicating their concern directly to the employee wearing the product, asking them to remove it.
  - 2) Report the issue to their manager/designate if the product cannot be removed or the employee refuses to remove it.
- 3.5 When an employee has a *severe* reaction to a scent or fragrance, the employee must:
  - 1) Immediately leave the affected area until it is safe to return.
  - 2) Report the incident to their manager/designate.
  - 3) Complete a Staff Incident Report (OHS-5).
- 3.6 When a product cannot be removed or an employee refuses to remove it, the manager of the area will follow-up with the employee wearing the product to reinforce this policy (see 3.10).

#### Clients and Visitors

- 3.7 If an employee notices a client/visitor wearing a scented or fragrant product and is not adversely affected by it, they will approach the client/visitor and:
  - 1) Educate the client/visitor about this policy.
  - 2) Provide the client/visitor with a Scent Safe Brochure.
  - 3) If necessary, inform the manager of the area, who will then follow the steps outlined in 3.9.

- 3.8 If an employee experiences a severe reaction from a scent or fragrance worn by a client or visitor, the employee must:
- 1) Immediately leave the affected area until it is safe to return.
  - 2) Report the incident to their manager/designate.
  - 3) Complete a Staff Incident Report (OHS-5).
- 3.9 The manager will speak directly to the client or visitor about this policy and, at his or her discretion, may ask the client or visitor to reschedule their appointment if it is reasonable to believe that a health and safety risk will continue to exist for other staff, students, volunteers, clients or visitors with scent sensitivities.

***Dealing with non-compliance***

- 3.10 Employees and students who report to work wearing scented or fragrant products are required to make every reasonable attempt to remove the scent or fragrance. If an employee or student continues to report to work in non-compliance of this policy, standard disciplinary measures will apply. This may include asking an employee to return home to remove a scented or fragrant product
- 3.11 If a volunteer, client or visitor is non-compliant, it should be reported to the manager of the area. The manager will speak to the volunteer, client or visitor directly about this policy.
- 3.12 If the volunteer, client or visitor remains non-compliant, they may be asked to leave.

***Promoting Awareness***

- 3.13 Scent Safe Workplace signage will be posted in visible locations on TBDHU property to ensure clients are aware of this policy. Signage will also be posted at staff entrances.
- 3.14 The Scent Safe Workplace policy and scent safety information will be posted on the Health Unit's website to educate the public and clients about this policy.
- 3.15 Where appropriate, a brief Scent Safe Workplace message may be included on Health Unit advertising, communication, and promotional materials (e.g., appointment cards, schedules, agendas, invitations) to help support a Scent Safe Workplace.

**4. SCOPE**

- 4.1 This policy and procedure applies to all TBDHU staff, students, volunteers, clients and visitors.

**5. RESPONSIBILITY**

- 5.1 **Managers** are responsible for training and educating employees on the Scent Safe Workplace policy and to ensure this policy is adhered to.

**Managers** will ensure that employees wearing a scented or fragrant product in the workplace make every reasonable attempt to remove the scent and do not wear or use the product again.

**Managers** will ensure that clients and visitors are informed of the Scent Safe Workplace policy.

- 5.2 The **manager responsible for information systems/property** will ensure that “odour free” or “low odour” products are purchased, when possible, and that vendors and contractors are notified of this policy.

The **manager responsible for information systems/property** will provide advanced notification to managers when extended cleaning, renovations, painting or construction will be occurring, and to post signage in visible locations to educate staff, students, volunteers, visitors, clients and contractors.

- 5.3 **Employees** must adhere to the Scent Safe Workplace policy and, if approached, refrain from wearing a scented product.
- 5.4 **Human resources** will ensure that new employees, students and volunteers receive orientation to the Scent Safe Workplace policy and training on the adverse effects that scented and fragrant products have on sensitive individuals.

## 6. DEFINITIONS

- 6.1 A **Scented or Fragrant Product** is any product that *emits a distinctly noticeable scent or fragrance strong enough to be perceived by others*, including but not limited to: colognes, perfumes, after shave, soaps, lotions, powders and deodorants, hair sprays/products, cleaning products, air fresheners and deodorizers.

Strongly scented flowers (e.g., lilies, hyacinths and hibiscus) that *emit a distinctly noticeable scent or fragrance strong enough to be perceived by others* are considered scented products.

- 6.2 **Unscented** means there have been no fragrances added to the cosmetic product, or that a masking agent was added in order to hide the scents from the other ingredients in the cosmetic.
- 6.3 **Severe reaction:** An employee is unable to perform their duties and responsibilities after being exposed to a scented or fragrant product, resulting in lost-time and/or medical attention received beyond Standard First Aid.
- 6.4 **Minor reaction:** An employee is able to continue performing their duties and responsibilities after being exposed to a scented or fragrant product. A minor reaction may require the use of the Rest Area or Standard First Aid but does not result in lost-time and/or medical attention beyond Standard First Aid.

## 7. REFERENCES and RELATED STATEMENTS of POLICY and PROCEDURE

- 7.1 Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulations

7.2 Ontario Human Rights Code

7.3 HR-08-02-09 Discipline

7.4 OHS-11-01 Policy Statement

**8. ATTACHMENTS**

None

**9. FORMS**

9.1 [OHS-5 Staff Incident Report](#)