



SUBJECT: EMPLOYMENT – SCENT-FREE POLICY

Policy No: E-2022-06

Date: March 28, 2022

Review Date: March 2026

Pages: 4

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for all staff, Board members, and volunteers with respect to the wearing of fragrances, scents, or scented personal products in library facilities and the use of scented housekeeping products in library facilities.

Innisfil ideaLAB & Library (the Library) realizes an increasing number of people have developed sensitivities to certain chemicals. The Library wishes to limit the exposure of staff, Board members, volunteers and customers to chemical substances.

POLICY

General

In support of the Library's commitment to the provision of a healthy and safe environment for all, the Library will strive to provide an indoor air environment that reduces the risk of chemical hazards. The Library will maintain a scent-free policy, and wherever possible, eliminate the use of certain building cleaning products and materials, where scent or other properties are known to cause health problems.

This policy minimizes exposure to the chemicals in scented products, thereby promoting a healthy work environment and reducing the barriers to service for those individuals with chemical sensitivities.

Application

This policy applies to all staff, Board members and volunteers in regard to using, wearing, and bringing scented products and materials into Library facilities.

The Library is unable to guarantee a scent-free environment in the public areas of our facilities. However, each site shall display appropriate information and signage to *encourage* visitors to refrain from wearing scented products.

All employees have a responsibility to administer this policy. In this regard, employees are expected to communicate our commitment to individuals who are using scented products in a cordial and respectful manner.

Wherever practical and feasible in the Library, fragrance-free products will be used, and in general, the purchase and use of such products will be preferred over scented substitutes. Cleaning, maintenance, renovations, etc. with which "atypical" odour is associated should be scheduled to occur at times of reduced occupancy, wherever possible and practical.

Definitions

Environmental Sensitivities (ES) describes a chronic condition whereby a person has symptoms when exposed to certain chemicals or other environmental agents at low levels tolerated by most people. The symptoms may range in severity from mild to debilitating (Source - Women's Health Matters, Women's College Hospital).

Scent-Free or Fragrance-Free or Unscented indicates that the product is odourless or nearly odourless and it contains no odour-masking ingredients such as a perfume, as opposed to having a smell or odour such as those associated with cosmetics or from other products such as air fresheners, cleaners, etc. (Source - The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety - CCOHS).

Scents/Scented -Usually mean the smells or odours from cosmetics (perfume, make-up, shampoo, deodorant, etc.) or from other products such as air fresheners, cleaners, etc.

Guidelines

Use of scented products in an indoor environment can have a serious impact on health. These products can contain, in various concentrations, up to several hundred different types of chemicals. Chemical ingredients in scented products include acetone, benzaldehyde, benzyl acetate, benzyl alcohol, camphor, ethanol, ethyl acetate, limonene, linalool, methylene chloride, a-pinene, g-terpinene and a-terpineol. Some of these chemicals are respiratory irritants and are known to have neurological or systemic effects at high concentrations.

As many scented products contain respiratory irritants, they may trigger sensitivities or aggravate asthma and allergies in certain individuals. Symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, weakness, insomnia, malaise, loss of appetite, depression, upper respiratory symptoms, shortness of breath, difficulty with concentration and skin irritation have also been reported to result from exposure to scented products. Many of these symptoms are reported to worsen when people spend much of their time working indoors.

In the interest of a healthy work environment and to reduce discomfort (ranging from mild to debilitating) for staff, volunteers, or customers with environmental sensitivities or allergies, the policy requires that staff and volunteers refrain from wearing fragrances, scents, or scented products at work.

This policy will be communicated during new employee and Board orientation, through signs posted in staff and public areas, and through Supervisors and Managers verbally informing their Staff, Board and volunteers. If an employee reports a health issue pursuant to exposure to a scented product within the workplace, it is Management's responsibility to respond to the concern as accommodation is required under the federal and provincial Human Rights Acts

When a Library employee becomes aware that a Library user is wearing a strongly scented product while in the Library, the employee may approach the user and direct their attention to the Scent Free signs, posted at the Library entrance, and advise them of this policy.

Although the Library Board cannot ensure scent-free public areas, it will endeavour to educate the public, including room rental applicants, about the potentially significant health impacts of exposure to scents. As a result, those renting Library space will be provided with appropriate communication to advise of this policy.

Resources:

*Government of Canada's Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety (CCOHS)
Women's College Hospital, Toronto, Ontario*

<https://www.womenshealthmatters.ca/health-centres/environmental-health/environmental-sensitivities/>

Canadian Lung Association

Ontario Human Rights Act

Canada Human Rights Act

Related Policies:

Health & Safety Policy

Room Rental Policy

Sustainable Housekeeping Policy

Approved by the Innisfil Public Library Board, March 28, 2022; Motion Number: 2022.23

Supersedes Policy #E-2018-06, approved March 19, 2018, Motion #2018.26; &

Policy #E-2014-13, approved May 20, 2014, Motion #2014.38

Policy #E-2011-02, approved February 22, 2011, Motion #2011.13; &

Policy #2008-02, approved January 21, 2008, Motion #2008.04; &

Policy #2004-03, approved March 8, 2004, Motion #2004.24.