

Clean Has No Scent

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Air Quality

One of the newest issues to confront a property manager or a building manager is the one of using scent in cleaning products or to use fragrances to “freshen” specific rooms such as washrooms, lobbies, cafeterias and general office and classroom areas.

Today, there is a growing population that suffers from allergies to various fragrances, scents and odours. Their reactions can vary from mild to severe. In some cases, allergic reactions can result in a decrease in performance and an increase in the number of sick days taken by these employees. Some people must alter their daily activities to avoid potential exposure to these allergens. For this reason, many buildings and companies are developing a NO SCENT or a SCENT FREE policy. These policies usually include the banning of wearing any type of perfumes and fragrances as well as the use of no scent cleaning products in the building.

The difficulty for many buildings however, is that many people associate clean with a fragrance. Depending on personal preference and often habits from your childhood, many associate clean with a floral, lemon, pine etc scent. After years of using scented cleaning products, the association of clean and scent is a difficult one to break. This association is heavily reinforced by advertisements and television commercials who lead us to believe that our houses can only be clean if we use fragrances in each and every room and on all surfaces.

So how does one go about changing this association that clean must have a scent? Communication to all building occupants is the key to success. Here is a step by step guide to help you successfully implement a scent free policy.

- 1) **Draft a No Scent Policy** - If possible involve human resources, health & safety committee and key managers. Have one person responsible for answering all questions or concerns regarding the policy. Sample policies are readily available. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety address this issue on their web site http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/scent_free.html
- 2) **Educate building occupants.** It is important to explain why the policy is in place and the health of individuals is at stake. You may choose to include brochures or flyers in payroll envelopes, publish articles in company newsletter, or give presentations. In any case, the goal is to inform all employees of the health concerns related to scents and why the policy is needed.



- 3) **Set a deadline for the policy to be put in place.** This will ensure that there is adequate time to remove fragrance dispensers in various rooms of the building and to review and choose no scent cleaning chemicals. Adequate time to train the cleaning staff on how to use the new chemicals must be accounted for.
- 4) **Review cleaning frequencies and cleaning tasks.** Areas where odour can be troublesome such as washrooms and kitchens should be reviewed to ensure any offensive odours do not persist.
- 5) **Consider limiting employees eating lunches at their desks.** Odours from lunches can be very offensive to other employees. Having food at the office desk can harbour odour causing bacteria and create unsanitary working conditions.
- 6) **Post a list of approved unscented products that will be used in the building.** This will avoid any potential confusion as what is acceptable and unacceptable as cleaning products in the building.
- 7) **Post signage that the building is now a scent free building at all entrances, in common hallways, in washrooms and in cafeterias.**
- 8) **The week you begin to clean the building with unscented products, communicate that the change has been made.** Occupants will need to be reminded that their building has been cleaned - the only difference there is no lingering fragrance to remind them that this task has been done.
- 9) **Review concerns and complaints.** Have a process to address non compliant building occupants.

The association of clean with fragrance is a strong one. The media is constantly reinforcing that for a room to be clean it must have a lingering fragrance. Breaking this association is not easy. With time and education, people will come to realize that clean has no scent. And often the benefit of using scent free cleaning products is that you can choose products that are formulated to reduce the impact on the environment without sacrificing cleaning effectiveness. No scent products are better for your health and better for the environment.



| About Louise Taillon

Louise Taillon has been active in the cleaning industry for over 23 years. Today she is Director of Training for The Sani Marc Group. She is responsible for managing all aspects of the company Training Program for both employees and clients.

Louise is a frequent guest speaker on green cleaning, cleaning for health and how to successfully implement corporate sustainability programs. She also has experience in implementing Business Continuity and Corporate Pandemic Plans, helping businesses protect their employees and investments in the event of sudden outbreaks or loss of critical business components.

Louise is a graduate of Ryerson University, is a LEED Green Associate, is an Expert Sustainability Professional (ESP), and is currently studying to become an accredited LEED Professional. See her linkedin profile or follow her on twitter @EnviroWeezy

