

Is there a nice way to post a 'no perfumes' sign?

Question: I work in at a college and have a situation: One of my co-workers is very sensitive to smells (perfumes, colognes, etc.) and is often relocated to other workspaces to avoid headaches or becoming nauseous.

Her supervisor would like to put some type of sign around the area, notifying people that the area is fragrance-free. This will be posted inside the office (for other co-workers who wear perfumes to back off a little), as well as outside the office (for students/visitors who visit at the window).

What's a nice way of wording a simple sign, without offending anyone?

Thanks! -- *Tami*

Comments

I found the following online:

notices announcing Board meetings will include the statement that: "Persons attending Board meetings are requested to refrain from using perfume, cologne, and other fragrances for the comfort of other participants." A sign will be posted outside Board meeting rooms reminding persons attending the meetings to refrain from using fragrances.

Hopefully this verbage will help.

Posted by: Betty - Sr. Admin | November 10, 2006 at 11:48 AM

I found an example of a policy at the address below.

<http://www.access-board.gov/about/policies/fragrance.htm>

Posted by: Linda | November 10, 2006 at 11:48 AM

I would make a sign that read "Fragrance Free Environment", and under that write something like, "Due to allergies please refrain from strong fragrances." However, I don't think this will stop people from coming into the office from the outside. Especially since you work in a college, students are usually busy and I doubt a sign would stop them from coming in just because they are wearing perfume.

Posted by: Kristen | November 10, 2006 at 11:52 AM

I agree with the comments by Kristen, you can do this but some people will not read these signs. Also, doing something like this could be opening "a puzzle box" for your facility. What will you do when someone is allergic to "wool" - ask people not to wear wool in a certain area, or cat dander, which is on most people who own cats, ask them not to approach a certain area. I know this sounds strange but I have first hand seen this type of "do not do" get out of hand. Whatever you decide, just be careful.

Posted by: June K. | November 10, 2006 at 12:03 PM

I'm reminded of what my Choir Director says to remind us that we shouldn't use fragrances. At the beginning of the season,he says, "Remember now,this choir has no scents!"

Posted by: Annette DiMarco | November 10, 2006 at 12:24 PM

By accommodating an individual you may open yourself up to other problems such as; is this individual getting special treatment or when you say no to other staff they will refer back to this decision, like you made a new regulations for her but why not me. It is a delicate situation that will cause gossip among the staff. If she is truly bothered I would try to spread the word among the staff before posting a sign.

Another solution could be to add it to your dress code; like no excessive perfumes/cologne, no excessive jewelry/ facial jewelry,etc. And incorporate it into an existing policy vs. a sign. The staff may no target this individual as much.

Best of luck

Posted by: Jocelyn | November 10, 2006 at 01:34 PM

I work for a Texas State Government agency and our communications office came up with the following. They have it posted in the ladies rooms and on our intranet. Hope it helps.

Healthy Workplace Reminder: Good Sense for Scents

What would you do if a coworker requested that you stop wearing your favorite perfume/cologne -- or any at all because it made him or her ill? Your reaction to that request may vary.

Perhaps you'd be irritated because it seemed petty or you'd just ignore it and hope it went away, but continue to wear your perfume/cologne and let your coworker suffer the consequences. Another choice would be to stop using fragrances at work in consideration of your coworker's health.

These same questions and responses apply to the use of other items in the workplace including: cleaning products, hair spray, air freshener, and so on.

While you're deciding which option you'd choose, consider the following:

About 15 percent of the general population have adverse health effects from perfumes and solvents, becoming ill from even small amounts of fragrance products.

Nearly 72 percent of asthmatics have adverse reactions to these items.

Reported adverse health effects from these items range from chronic nausea, migraine headaches, asthma attacks and other respiratory problems, chronic fatigue, burning & watering eyes, dizziness to cardiac and neurological symptoms.

Some U.S. employers ban fragrances in the workplace due to the health needs of their employees.

While DADS does not have a specific fragrance-free policy, you are asked to be sensitive to those who may suffer adverse reactions to fragrances. This is a serious health issue for a significant number of people. Courtesy toward your fellow coworkers, clients, and the general public is always a top priority, and may include limiting or eliminating fragrances (e.g. perfumes/colognes, hair spray, and air freshener).

DADS employees are asked to be respectful of the needs of others. Please remember that your use of fragrances is voluntary, while another's adverse reaction is not.

Posted by: Edith Avila | November 10, 2006 at 01:37 PM

I believe in keeping it simple. My thought is people moving about won't take the time to read something lengthy. I made up a quick and cute sign to post with only three words and a cartoon character. It made me smile, so I doubt someone would take offense, or even bother to ask why it's posted. If you would like to see it, email me and I will send it to you. (I can't paste it here.)

Posted by: Valerie Lee | November 10, 2006 at 04:10 PM

I am one of those people who have problems with fragrances. When somebody wears perfume or uses strongly scented hand lotion, I literally cannot breathe, and there is case law to protect my right to a fragrance-free workplace. Betty & Valerie have the right ideas, and you should not worry about "offending" other people. It's the chemicals in perfume and other scented products which cause the problem, and those of us who can't handle fragrances should not have to feel that accommodating a simple request not to wear perfume is "special" treatment. If I'm away from the office because fragrances make me sick, this puts additional pressure on others in the work group to take up my duties and is not cost-effective either.

Posted by: Anon | November 13, 2006 at 11:26 AM

The person with the allergy should wear a face mask or some other apparatus to filter out the offensive odors. While I agree that STRONG scents are inappropriate and offensive to others, one simply cannot expect that the entire environment - indoors or out - can be made safe for persons with breathing problems - or any OTHER problems, for that matter. I'm not giving up my scents - or my sense - for "special needs" individuals. If it was ME with the breathing problem I would figure out a way to avoid or filter it out.

I drive by a feedlot every morning during my commute. Using the same logic as those who expect others to accommodate their "special needs," can I demand that it be closed because I can't hold my nose long enough to get past it? I repeat: GOOD GRIEF.

Posted by: GoodGrief | November 14, 2006 at 02:06 PM

"No perfumes or cologne allowed in this area due to allergies."

We have a small staff (15), and one person who used to work here had the same allergies. Whenever a new employee was hired, they were told right from the start that no perfume or cologne was allowed due to the allergies. Nobody had a problem with it.

Posted by: Mark | November 17, 2006 at 12:39 PM

How does this person handle this issue outside of the workplace? From your comments she is working at a window where anyone can come in. Posting a sign will undoubtedly not help her situation. I know I would not read a sign, go home, take a shower, and then come back (and frankly I'm not giving up my hairspray or deodorant either!). Is there another location she can work and another person take care of the window? As for coworkers, once they know of the allergy/sensitivity they will likely be respectful of the problem. Communicate the details of the issue to all of her coworkers. A sign might be a nice reminder but I don't believe it will actually keep the area fragrance-free.

Posted by: M | November 17, 2006 at 12:49 PM

To M & Good Grief: Look again at Eidth Avila's remarks, particularly this one: Please remember that you use of fragrances is voluntary, while another's adverse reaction is not. Most of my problems with fragrance happen indoors; when I'm outdoors, I can move away from the fragrances. I have had to leave crowded restaurants, movies, concerts, when those sitting close to me have "heavy-duty" (yes, I know it's in the nose of the beholder) and I do so. I use non-fragrance detergent in the washing machine, non-fragrance soaps, shampoos, hairspray, cosmetics, hand & body lotion and antiperspirant/deodorant, all of which are not difficult to find. The only place where I am entitled, by law, to have some control over this issue is the workplace. So to Good Grief & M: thank goodness you and your other family members do not have allergies, or you wouldn't have such a callous attitude towards people like myself.

Posted by: Anon | November 17, 2006 at 01:47 PM

This questions has created some petty reactions. It has caused some to sound insensitive and other sound very entitled and short sighted. Enough, get over it and move on. If your situation doesn't change at work and you can't breathe, quit and find another job. This is how our society has become so sue happy. You are the only person in charge of your life.

Posted by: Jocelyn | November 17, 2006 at 04:00 PM

To Anon: I did not by any means mean to sound uncaring or callous toward this issue. My point, which you obviously missed, is that the entire environment can not be controlled as long as an individual works with the public. I do have allergies and I have spoken with my coworkers regarding my issues but I do not expect that everyone that I come in contact with will care about MY problems. I personally do not use heavily scented products. Your comments were unnecessary, if you actually read my comments you might realize I was trying to help and give my opinion but it seems you were just looking for some reason to criticize others and make yourself sound mistreated.

Posted by: M | November 22, 2006 at 02:54 PM

My dear "Anon" -

MOST people try NOT to be offensive to anyone in any way - and that includes not over applying fragrances. But so many things like hair spray and deodorant CONTAIN fragrances! There is a reason for that. Without the fragrance, many of these products would be offensive to the WEARER.

What are you going to do, force "offenders" to go out and buy fragrance-free products? Or will you foot the bill for those? Do others have to leave the building if you detect a whiff of something you don't care for? Do they need to "lawyer up" before crossing your path? All this talk about "case law" to support this issue makes my hair stand on end. Who would want to work with someone who might sue them over their choice of shampoo or hand lotion???

If there is someone in your workplace who is wearing a fragrance so heavily applied that it offends everyone in the office, they should be SPOKEN to, not sued.

Posting signs is offensive - it is a coward's way of dealing with the situation. It implies that EVERYONE is offending you -that's grossly unfair to the innocent, not to mention that it really ticks people off. You cannot force or expect every single person with whom you come in contact to conform to YOUR personal needs or expectations.

If an individual offends you, tell them to their face - don't hide behind some silly sign.

And if you find - which I expect you will - that the majority of people are offended by YOUR unreasonable demands, you really should quit and find a situation where you will not have to come in such close contact with others.

You may find a solitary job - telecommuting, perhaps? - much less stressful, as it would avoid these ongoing confrontations - and I'm sure your current co-workers would be greatly relieved that they will be able to avoid them, too.

Posted by: Good Grief | November 22, 2006 at 02:56 PM

I'm amazed at the reactions this question has gotten myself. For those of you who wear fragrances, remember that you have evenings, weekends and holidays to wear them whenever and wherever. Actually, I have had very few problems in my various workplaces, but there are people who announce their presence by the amount and strength of what they wear. Areas of my present workplace are "fragrance-free" because of people who have asthma which is triggered by fragrance (not my particular situation). I would be extremely unlikely to sue anybody over use of fragrance unless my health were irreversibly damaged to the point that I was totally disabled(I only mentioned case law because I'm protected by it) and telecommuting is not an option in my department. Nor should I have to leave a very good job with excellent pay and benefits at the very best place I have ever worked because I have a problem which is easily addressed. As far as the public is concerned, I deal with members of the public at the customer counter everyday and take public transportation to and from work. Most of the time people wear a minimal amount of fragrances, and I don't experience the problems. But some people believe that more is better & use fragrances accordingly without realizing how much they are "perfuming" the air.. And some of you still don't get it: your use of fragrance is voluntary: the reaction is not.

Posted by: Anon | November 27, 2006 at 02:05 PM

If someone's use of fragrance is over the top, TELL them. SOMEONE needs to! Obviously they didn't listen to

their mother or to Miss Manners. Why not smack them upside the head with a copy of the "case law?"

You can't expect an employer to post signs for each & every employee's "issues" - as one poster noted earlier in this thread, this could very quickly get totally out of control. And it would tend to give one's office a cluttered, unprofessional appearance.

Posted by: Helloooooooooooooooooooooo | December 01, 2006 at 12:16 PM

Recently a new employee was hired who has allergies to strong scents, and everyone has been told not to wear perfumes, etc when we are going to be around her. Our department contains two divisions, and I work in the division which is off-site from the main office and she works in the main office site. I was really interested to see this item here. I feel that I have to comply with the request because it was made by the boss, but there is no excuse for one person to make everyone else change their personal hygiene routines for one person. In this day and age there are allergy tests and medications which can control her symptoms and it makes much more sense for one person to take the steps to deal with their physical issues than to expect everyone else to comply. No matter how nicely it is said, the fact is that one person controls what everyone else can or can't do. And who decides whose scent is "over the top"? That would be a highly subjective call. I say, go to the Allergist and deal with your personal problems personally.

Posted by: Diana | December 08, 2006 at 01:45 PM

I heard something on the radio the other day that reminded me of this thread. The "Got Milk" people attached scented strips - that smelled like just-out-of-the-oven chocolate chip cookies - behind "Got Milk" posters in bus shelters in San Francisco. This generated a lot of complaints from the "special needs" nerds - so the ad campaign was terminated & the scented posters removed. Now, the radio reports, the only cookie smells in bus shelters in San Francisco are from BAKERIES. I suppose next these "special needs" folks are going to demand that bakeries and coffee vendors eliminate THEIR scents from the AIR. Thanks, Judge, whoever you are. "Give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile." I hope the "special needs/especially litigious" will sue to get pesticides and other toxins out of the air BEFORE turning their attention to the odors that MOST of us find pleasurable. These folks are out of control.

Posted by: I agree with Diana | December 08, 2006 at 02:08 PM

Just politely ask those that consistently bother you or post a small polite sign outside your office. I had one coworker that wore a really strong scent that everyone in the office would talk about when she left. One day someone mentioned it to her and she apologized. She said she didn't notice how strong she was applying her scent, she had a family member in the hospital that was non-responsive to many things but when she came in her room with "her fragrance" there was always a response. She toned it down after that, she really didn't realize how strong it was. I have allergies and worked in a college setting with other people with allergies. There's just not too much you can do for the occasional offender but day to day co-workers you can just politely let them know how much it bothers you.

Posted by: Brenda | December 08, 2006 at 04:27 PM