



**Date:** April 23, 2010

**Subject:** Step 2 Grievance  
Case No.:E06C-4E-C 10075248  
District No: CLC 2010-0429  
Union No: 88JD10209  
Grievant: Class Action

**To:** John Durham  
APWU  
PO Box 1874  
Fargo ND 58107

**The above grievance was discussed with you at Step 2 of the grievance procedure, in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 of the National Agreement.**

**As a final and complete settlement of this matter, and without prejudice to the position of either party in this or any other matter (not to be cited in any other grievance or forum), the following resolution has been entered into by the parties:**

Management will introduce the attached guidelines on the use of Perfumes and Scented Products to employees via job talks.

**The above constitutes a full and complete settlement of the subject case and resolves any and all other issues pertaining thereto.**

Deb Blanck Lovelace  
USPS Step 2 Representative  
Fargo ND 58107

Greg Johnson  
Postmaster  
Fargo ND 58102

John Durham  
APWU Step 2 Representative  
Fargo ND 58107

cc: Grievance File(s)

# **GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF PERFUMES AND SCENTED PRODUCTS**

## **Purpose**

The Fargo Post Office is committed to a safe and healthy environment for all employees, managers and customers. This guideline is intended to:

- 1) Increase the awareness within the facility about the potential impact of fragrance chemicals on the health, wellbeing, productivity and lifestyle of those affected.
- 2) Ask for the voluntary cooperation towards a scent-reduced environment.
- 3) Provide the steps for responding to scent-related issues.

## **What is the issue?**

Exposure to perfumes and other scented products can trigger serious health reactions in individuals with asthma, allergies, migraines, or chemical sensitivities. Fragrances are found in a wide range of products. Common scented products include perfume, cologne, aftershave, deodorant, soap, shampoo, hairspray, body spray, makeup and powders. Examples of other products with added scents include air fresheners, fabric softeners, laundry detergents, cleaners, carpet deodorizers, facial tissues, and candles. We generally think that it is a personal choice to use fragrances, however, fragrance chemicals are by their very nature shared. The chemicals vaporize into the air and are easily inhaled by those around us. Today's scented products are made up of a complex mixture of chemicals which can contribute to indoor air quality problems and cause health problems.

Some of these fragrance chemicals are known to be skin sensitizers. Some are also respiratory tract irritants, and can trigger asthma and breathing difficulties. Asthmatics commonly cite fragrances as initiating or exacerbating their asthma. Fragrances are also implicated in vascular changes that can trigger migraines in susceptible individuals. Individuals with chemical sensitivities can experience symptoms at very low levels in the air, far below those known to cause harmful effects in the general population. Susceptible individuals can experience a variety of symptoms, including headache, sore throat, runny nose, sinus congestion, wheezing, shortness of breath, dizziness, anxiety, anger, nausea, fatigue, mental confusion and an inability to concentrate. Although the mechanisms by which fragrance chemicals act to produce symptoms are not yet understood, the impact on all those affected can be quite severe, resulting in great difficulty in work and study activities.

## **Increasing Awareness**

This guideline is intended to raise the awareness within the Fargo Post Office about the potential impact of fragrance chemicals on the health, wellbeing, productivity and lifestyle of those affected. Information on scent awareness will be disseminated through safety talks, Labor/Management Minutes, information sheets, etc. and other areas where appropriate.

## **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 Fargo Post Office is asking for voluntary cooperation towards a scent-reduced environment. Employees 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 refrain from chemical-based scented products, and not a ban on scented products.

## **What is the Fargo Post Office doing about it?**

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

- Promote the reduction of unnecessary use of chemicals, including fragrance chemicals.
- Promote the use of environmentally-friendly and least harmful products in laboratories, cleaning materials, and building materials.
- Target harmful chemicals and contaminants and implement controls to effectively prevent or minimize their release into the general air as a result of building, maintenance, custodial, research and teaching activities.
- Support the best possible air quality practicably attainable, by means of proper ventilation, peak performance and proper maintenance of building mechanical ventilation systems.
- Develop proper information and training to promote the above to the workforce.

## **What can you do?**

- Be considerate of those who are sensitive to fragrance chemicals. Avoid using scented products, instead, use scent-free 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 potpourris) 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.

## **What can you do if you are sensitive to fragrance chemicals?**

If you feel you can do so comfortably, approach the scented individual and let him/her 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. As an employee, you may ask your supervisor to discuss this matter with the individual involved or with the group of employees.

Consult with your physician about your symptoms.

## **What can you do as a Supervisor?**

- If an individual in your work area is adversely affected by scented products, listen to the person with respect and civility.
- Clarify the issue. Ask the individual to describe their health effects, the factors that make the problem better or worse, and the actions they are taking to deal with it.
- Investigate the issue and use good judgment and consideration to provide a fair, uniform and timely resolution.
- Discuss the issue with your employees 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.
- Request everyone's cooperation and understanding to voluntarily avoid the use of scented products in the area. Discuss the benefits of a scent-free work area.

## **What should you do if you're approached about the scented product you're wearing?**

- If an individual or your supervisor informs you that the fragranced products that you use or wear are a problem and requests 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.
- Discuss the issue openly. Ask questions about the health impact on the person, the types of symptoms experienced, the factors which make the person's symptoms better or worse (e.g. fragrance type, amount used).
- Empathize with the individual. Work with cooperation and understanding towards a satisfactory resolution.