

Sample Letter to Building Management

[DATE]

[Building Management]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP]

RE: Use of Cleaning Products

Dear [NAME],

The [COMPANY NAME] has recently adopted a fragrance-free policy that addresses the use of cleaning products. Fragrances, including cleaning chemicals, can cause coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, sore throat, and headaches. Our employees with asthma find the odors associated with the cleaning products used to clean the office, bathrooms and the building's common areas may cause breathing difficulty or asthma symptoms.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes for Occupational Safety and Health published, "Cleaning Products and Work-related Asthma," which examined reports of work-related asthma (WRA) from 1993-1997. Results showed that 12% of all confirmed cases of WRA reported were associated with cleaning products. 80% of workers in these cleaning product cases had not had asthma before but developed asthma because of workplace exposures. Many of the workers in these cases who developed asthma did not work directly with the cleaning products, but rather they were exposed because others used cleaning agents in their work area. The California Department of Public Health has also found that one in 10 workers reporting work-related asthma associate their symptoms with cleaning products. Now that cleaning agents are known to be potential triggers for work-related asthma, steps can be taken to protect workers from this important exposure in the workplace.

Building maintenance staff may purchase "green" cleaning chemicals with the expectation that green cleaning products are safer for workers and the environment. However, placing the word "green" in a name or on a bottle does not ensure that a chemical is safe. In addition, there are several "fragrance-free" products that may clean just as effectively.

Work-related asthma can have serious consequences. For the health and safety of our staff and visitors to our office, we would like to request the building maintenance staff to:

1. Review the cleaning product warning labels and Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) for chemicals that are known to cause asthma symptoms. MSDSs are also available online at www.msdsonline.com.
2. Use fragrance-free and safer products. There are several resources to help identify safer products listed under "resources" below. Using safer products protects workers and others in the office building.

Resources

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has standards for safer cleaning products under the EPA's Design for the Environment (DfE) Safer Product Labeling Program (<http://www.epa.gov/dfe>). A DfE label on a cleaner indicates that the cleaner meets the EPA's safety standards.

Informed Green Solutions (<http://www.informedgreensolutions.org>) has a number of fact sheets and publications on safe cleaning practices.

The [COMPANY NAME] would be interested in working with you to identify safer cleaning products to protect the janitorial staff, our employees and visitors, and to help us adhere to our new policy.

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Sincerely,

[Signature]

[NAME] [TITLE]

[COMPANY NAME]