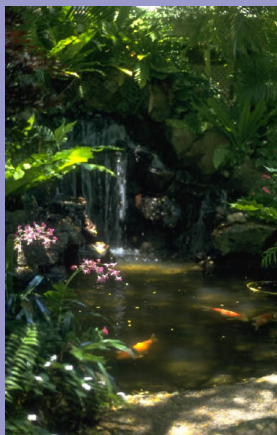


## Sal's Place

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### **McBride Sues Over Perfume in the Workplace: Banning Fragrances & Cigarette Smoke to Improve Health**

Susan McBride works for the US city of Detroit. McBride is suing the city under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to encourage the city to establish a fragrance-free policy mandating that employees come to work un-scented just like they come to work and leave the cigarettes outside.

Like cigarettes, fragrances contain neurotoxicants that have been scientifically proven to reduce air flow and cause neurotoxicity. The ingredients in common perfumes are actually toxicants that harm everyone forced to share the same airspace. Perfume is not required for hygiene and often just plain stinks. A daily shower solves the problem of odor management quite easily and avoids the effect of sweat mixed with cologne that is quite offensive. A change to a healthier diet for an individual with exceptionally bad body odor generally corrects the odor. Perfume, on the other hand, just adds to the stench.

A study at Anderson Laboratories in Vermont concluded that fragrance chemicals caused a variety of acute toxicities in mice after an hour long exposure to breathing five commercial colognes. The researchers discovered "the emissions of these fragrance products caused various combinations of sensory irritation, pulmonary irritation, decreases in expiratory airflow velocity,

as well as alterations of the functional observational battery indicative of neurotoxicity." A computerized test was used to detect decreases in expiratory flow velocity, indicating airflow limitation. Mice exposed to toilet water, rather than cologne, did not show any change in air flow velocity, pulmonary function, or neurological function. "Neurotoxicity was more severe after mice were repeatedly exposed to the fragrance products. Evaluation of one of the test atmospheres with gas chromatography/mass spectrometry revealed the presence of chemicals for which irritant and neurotoxic properties had been documented previously" which confirmed the presence of these damaging chemicals in the colognes (Anderson & Anderson, 1998).

Many people do not realize that fragrances have changed over the years and are not regulated by law. Once a pleasant and natural oil from a plant, fragrances are now made with many chemical ingredients that have become harmful to human health and are not disclosed on the label. When people walk around wearing these fragrances, they share them with everyone around them. Breathing second-hand fragrance is like breathing second-hand smoke. It has all the same effects amounting to acute toxicity. Wearing cologne affects all those who share the same air space, including pets and children who are at increased risk due to their smaller size. Asthmatics, respiratory patients, and the chemically sensitive can also be seriously injured by fragrances. The effects are not limited to these groups though. Even the wearer is sacrificing good health.

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Synthetic fragrances are unnecessary and often unpleasant for others to smell. The media has misled us to believe that scents make us sexy and attractive. Quite to the contrary, like animals, our bodies put out our own distinct scent that is sexually attractive. Many cannot tolerate being near these toxicants and avoid them. More and more employers are enacting fragrance free policies in the workplace leading to a proven reduction of migraines and missed work. The Oregon police department is one such employer and their fragrance policy is already part of their employee handbook and can be read at:

<http://www.mcs-america.org/PortlandCallCenterFragranceFreePolicy.doc>

and

<http://www.mcs-america.org/PortlandRecordsDeptFragranceFreePolicy.doc>

Before fragrances emerged on the market the human species still mated and reproduced. This shows that fragrances are not necessary to attract the opposite sex. Quite to the con-

trary, much like animals, we use body scent to attract mates. Some fragrance manufacturers have realized this and are now marketing fragrances that smell like sweat. Unfortunately these fragrances are synthetic, made with chemicals known for their neurotoxic effects.

Like smoking, this is an issue of the health of all employee's in the workplace. Smoking has been banned inside and in many states is also banned near doors and windows. Perfume and synthetic fragrances are already in the works. Fortunately, there are many natural, healthy alternatives.\

-LS

**Cited Reference**

Anderson RC & Anderson JH. Acute toxic effects of fragrance products. Arch Environ Health. 1998 Mar-Apr;53 (2):138-46.

