



Dear Church Staff,

We would like to tell you about a growing problem for millions of Americans who report allergic, immunologic, asthmatic and/or neurological reactions to chemicals and/or synthetic fragrances. Because of this, we would like to ask you to join our *campaign for Cleaner Indoor Air*, by adopting a simple policy that helps millions who experience various consequences when exposed to these substances.

For many people, breathing in fragrances from perfumes, colognes, fragranced personal care items, candles, air fresheners and/or cleaning supplies can just be a little annoying, "...but for a growing number of others, these smells, called 'emissions of volatile organic compounds,' can be a form of torment that throws their bodies into reactive overdrive. One whiff of a chemical cocktail...can result in a vast array of debilitating symptoms" (Ephraim).

It has been reported that exposure to fragrances can exacerbate several health conditions (Pitts). "By design, fragrances are composed of materials that quickly get into the air. Once in the air, these materials pose serious health concerns for many with asthma, allergies, migraines, chronic lung disease, and other health conditions" (FPINVA).

Surprisingly, this may include millions of people. For example, although not all with allergies report difficulties with perfumes and fragrances, "As many as 50 million people in the United States suffer from allergic disease" (AAAAI). In addition, "In 1998, it was estimated that 26.3 million Americans have been diagnosed with asthma in their lifetime" (ALA of Texas). Asthma is a serious respiratory disorder that can constrict and cause swelling of the airways. "The Institute of Medicine placed fragrance in the same category as second hand smoke in triggering asthma in adults and school age children" (FPINVA). What's more, "Up to 72% of asthmatics report their asthma is triggered by fragrance. Asthmatics and others that are negatively impacted by fragrance often have difficulties working, obtaining medical care, and going about activities of daily living because of others' use of scented products" (FPINVA).

Furthermore, "Approximately 12.6% of the population suffers from multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS), a condition in which they experience reactions from exposure to low concentrations of common chemicals..." (Adams). MCS is "...marked by *multiple symptoms* in *multiple organ systems* (usually the neurological, immune, respiratory, skin, 'GI,' and/or musculoskeletal) that recur chronic-ally in response to *multiple chemical exposures*. MCS Symptoms commonly include difficulty breathing, sleeping and/or concentrating, memory loss, migraines, nausea, abdominal pain, chronic fatigue, aching joints and muscles, and irritated eyes, nose, ears, throat and/or skin. In addition, some with MCS show impaired balance and increased sensitivity not just to odors but also to loud noises, bright lights, touch, extremes of heat and cold, and electromagnetic fields" (MCRR). Overall, reactions to toxic substances can be quite serious for many, leaving them unable to go shopping, to a doctor's office, to church or to work without risking an exposure. It is estimated that "...more than 5.2 million [with MCS] may lose jobs as a result" (Adams). Unfortunately, many become isolated from friends and family, disabled or homebound, because of their reactions to chemicals in our environment.

Due to the millions of Americans who report mild to severe reactions perfumes, colognes and chemical fragrances, *The CIA Campaign* strives to educate various facilities on creating a less threatening environment for this growing number of people. True, we may not be able to protect them from every possible harm, nor can we guarantee that our actions will provide a fool-proof environment. However, if we all do our part, we can make a huge difference by offering a more favorable haven.

## Campaign Letter for Churches - The Cleaner Indoor Air Campaign

That is why we would like to ask you to join us in our pursuit to bring down some of the invisible barriers that can fortress our churches! In order to be a part of this campaign, please join us in these steps towards cleaner indoor air. Various facilities around the world have already put these policies into place and are enjoying the benefits of a more comfortable office for themselves and their patients.

1) No Perfume Policy or Request Ask your staff and members not to wear perfume or cologne to the services and activities. This can be done by making regular announcements, posting notices in bulletins and hanging signs.

2) Add a Fragrance Free Zone Once you have requested your staff and members do not wear these items, adding a FF Section will help this group have an even safer place to sit without worry that a visitor who is wearing it will sit next to them. The FF Section will also restrict other synthetically fragranced products such as lotions, hair sprays, dryer sheets, deodorants and talcum powder, as well as smoke. Please note that this section will not be sufficient unless the majority of members stop using perfume and cologne, because the fragrance will permeate the rooms, halls and this section. If you cannot get the fragrance down to a tolerable level for those who have reactions, please consider developing a room with windows looking into the sanctuary that is "clean" and free of VOC's, stains, paints, new carpet, fragrance, cleaning products, etc. The drawback of not getting the congregation to cease the use of perfume and cologne is that it creates division in the body and blocks access for these members to hallways, classrooms and fellowship with other members.

3) Cleaning and Other Products- Exclude or limit the use of cleaning products, paints, stains, glues, pesticides, etc. that contain chemicals and/or synthetic fragrances. Instead, choose environmentally friendly, hypoallergenic products and no VOC products, as well as fragrance-free or natural soaps. Use air purifiers and exhaust fans that do not disperse chemical fragrances into the air in your restrooms. Notify employees and post a sign on the door when you use paint, stains, pesticides, new carpet, etc.

Thank you for your time and concern,

The CIA Campaign

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*References:* • Adams, Brandon (September 2003). "More than 12% of the Populations Reports Extreme Sensitivity to Low Levels of Common Chemicals." *Journal of Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP)*. <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/press/12pop.html> • American Academy of Allergy & Immunity (Spring 2002). "The Impact of Allergies." *Spring Allergies & Asthma Survival Guide*. [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org) • American Lung Association of Texas (July 2005). "Asthma in Adults Fact Sheet." *Asthma & Allergy*. [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org) • Ephraim, Rebecca (April 2002). "Smells Can Make You Sick." [www.consciouschoice.com](http://www.consciouschoice.com) • *Fragranced Products Information Network*. "Fragrances by Design." [www.fpinva.org](http://www.fpinva.org) • MCS Referral and Resources (2000). "Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Syndrome- Fact Sheet." [www.mcsrr.org](http://www.mcsrr.org) • Pitts, Connie (2003). *Get a Whiff of This: Perfumes (fragrances) – The Invisible Chemical Poisons* (Bloomington, IN:1stBooks).

*Disclaimer: Although some parties in the medical community remain skeptical of the cause-and-effect relationship between scents and physical reactions, many have concluded otherwise. We respect the individuals who report symptoms related to these issues. However, we are not making any medical claims in our attempt to assist this group. Please seek the advice of a health professional.*

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