

Any Advice on Handling the Health Effects of “Smudging” in the Workplace?



One of the new features of our updated website is the revamped ‘[Ask the Expert.](#)’ Readers can submit a workplace safety-related question and get answers from not only OHS Insider staff and members of our board of advisors but also from fellow readers and safety professionals.

The question below is a perfect example of one that’s best answered by someone who’s experienced the same issue in their workplace.

Rick D. wrote, ‘In our Municipality, we have groups who request to do a smudging ceremony within our buildings ‘ mostly the Heritage and Cultural Center. This First Nations ceremonial right is protected under legislation, so we will accommodate, no question about that.

The odour/smoke/smell in the air which is left over, is having an effect on city employees and other patrons in the building ‘ mostly those with respiratory type health issues. Our existing HVAC system spreads it throughout our building, affecting both employees and other patrons. Whether it is First Nations groups doing smudging, or other groups who may burn ceremonial incense, the effect on susceptible employees/patrons is the same.

What are other companies or Municipalities doing to implement a compromise where most are satisfied’ Adding in an additional HVAC system for this exact specific issue seems our only, or best, resolution. Have you added a policy’ Have you come up with a compromise which suits all parties’ Winter time brings minus 40 degree weather, so providing an outdoor non-heated place is not acceptable. Summer time is different as the parties conducting these ceremonies are happy to go outside. The First Nations groups we are working with are very happy to help us if they can and are very cognizant of the issue at hand and would like to see a resolution that everybody is happy with.

Any thoughts on this”

If you have any advice for Rick’or anyone else who’s submitted a question’please share it on the [Ask the Expert page](#) under the appropriate question. And thanks in advance for sharing your expertise with other members of our community!