



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS PRODUCT DECISION-MAKING - AIR FRESHENERS

I am a manager of a fitness club where ownership recently installed several time-released air freshener stations. The label on the air freshener indicates it can cause eye irritation and allergic reactions. Since the air freshener has been used, I have experienced nasal congestion. Should I be concerned?

Answer: Air fresheners are merely masking agents which release fragrances into the air. They do not eliminate complaint odors or fix odor problems, but just cover them up. Further, they can add to the complaint/problem as many people have individual sensitivity to contents within the air freshener themselves.

First, any product brought into your home, office, school, etc. should be selected and used to meet a specific need. If is to control an odor, the best solution is to find the source of the odor and eliminate the source or control objectionable accumulation through ventilation.

Second, product labels must be reviewed before purchase and use by a trained personnel. For commercial settings, OSHA 29 CFR 1910.1200 Hazard Communication Standard requires the manufacturer of products to supply *Safety Data Sheets (SDSs)*, formerly known as *Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs)* to all purchasers. SDSs contain product specific information regarding recommended use, toxicology and precautions. Information should be considered in conjunction with the manufacturer instructions, restrictions and intent. Air fresheners usually contain petroleum based propellants, (such as butane, ethanol and/or propane) along with fragrances. Know what you are adding to your indoor environment.

As an IAQ professional, the thought of adding a new product source (just as a masking agent) seems counterproductive to good air quality. When air freshener use is identified as an existing control during AET's IAQ investigations, a formal recommendation is consistently made to cease their use. IAQ controls in real life situations should always entail source control and proper ventilation use.

When you need professional help or advice, email Alan Sutherland, CIH, CHMM at a.sutherland@aetinc.biz or call 610-891-0114. We provide nationwide services; phone consultations are free. Check out the full range of environmental contracting/consulting services we provide at our website www.aetinc.biz.

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