



Smudging Safety Policy

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Applies To: Any person(s) requesting to perform smudging in a U-M owned or operated facility. This policy does not apply to U-M Flint and Dearborn campuses.

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Background

Smudging is a sacred practice used by some indigenous peoples of the Americas that involves the burning of sacred herbs. The smudge is lit and the resulting smoke is regarded as a purifying agent for the mind, body, and spirit. It has many purposes including: to begin a new day, as part of prayer, to cleanse a space; or to begin ceremonies, meetings, and gatherings. Smudging ceremonies may incorporate the smoke of sage, sweetgrass, cedar, tobacco, and other related medicinal plants as elements of purification and sacred ceremony. In support of the cultural integrity of our Indigenous/Native American students, faculty, staff, and guests, and in accordance with the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act, U-M has developed this Smudging Safety Policy to protect the health and safety of everyone on campus as well as the prevention of fire and false fire alarms.

Smudging Policy Statement

This policy is established to accommodate requests for smudging in U-M owned buildings. Every effort will be made to honor all requests as long as the smudging can be done without having a detrimental effect on: the health of non-participants, life safety, university assets, university operations, and university-owned historical collections.

The following are requirements for conducting smudge ceremonies indoors. It is the responsibility of the Event Organizer to initiate and follow these rules:

- Obtain written authorization through the Approval Process detailed below. Factors that will be considered include: automatic sprinkler protection, type of building construction, fire alarm coverage, smoke and/or heat detector coverage, fire extinguisher locations, number and location of potentially impacted occupants, proximity of combustible materials, presence or proximity of hazardous materials, chemicals, flammable vapors, and potential impact on business operations.

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- Minimize the exposure to those not participating in the smudging ceremony. Some people may have health considerations which could be impacted by ceremonial smoke.
 - Minimize the duration and quantity of smoke emitted during smudging ceremonies.
 - Follow the Smudging Procedures detailed below.

Authorization is not required for smudging outdoors. Indigenous/Native American students, faculty, staff, and guests may practice smudging ceremonies in all outdoor spaces on college property. Exceptions include locations near: building air intakes, flammable or combustible materials, fuel storage, or natural gas equipment.

This policy shall supersede the U-M Smoke-Free Campus Policy.

Approval Process

1. The Event Organizer shall contact the Facility Manager and/or Collection Curator of the building where smudging will take place and request preliminary approval. The request should be made at least two weeks in advance of the event date.
2. The Event Organizer shall complete an EHS online [Smudging Authorization Request](#) at least 2 weeks in advance of the proposed event date.
3. EHS will schedule and conduct a field review of the proposed location with the Event Organizer and the Facility Manager and/or Collection Curator to determine if the smudging can be safely accomplished. EHS will also consult the U-M Risk Management Department to give them an opportunity to participate in the review.
4. EHS will issue a written authorization to the Event Organizer and Facility Manager that includes any conditions required to accommodate the smudging request. Typical conditions include: disabling smoke detectors, supplying temporary ventilation, and/or providing a Fire Watch.
5. The Event Organizer will implement the agreed upon conditions. If smoke detectors must be disabled, the Event Organizer will contact the facilities Maintenance Asset Supervisor at least 10 days in advance of the proposed date so a work order can be coordinated and scheduled with a fire alarm technician. EHS identified Smoke detectors should only be disabled immediately before smudging and restored as soon as possible after the ceremony has concluded. This may incur a cost to the Event Organizer if the work order is extensive or must be completed outside of normal work hours.

If EHS determines that smudging cannot be safely conducted, the building Facility Manager and event organizer shall be notified as soon as practical after the initial field review with the reason the request cannot be honored. If the event location is not viable for safety reasons, another location may be recommended.

Smudging Procedures

Noncompliance with the smudging ceremony procedures may result in the triggering of the fire alarm system that could lead to an evacuation of building occupants and/or health and safety risks to the University community.

Prior to the ceremony:

- The Facilities Manager will provide reasonable notice to appropriate stakeholders and serve as the point of contact for building occupants. All stakeholders must be notified of the date, time, and location of the event. Building occupants with physical sensitivities to smoke or scent should be allowed to make alternate work arrangements.
- The Event Organizer will implement the conditions and place Work Orders required in the EHS authorization.
- The Facilities manager will confirm the status of the smoke alarm(s) prior to initiating the smudge ceremony.

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- Fire Alarm shop shall notify DPS Dispatch immediately prior to deactivating any alarms or detectors.
 - The container that holds the smudge material must be heat resistant and made of a material that will not easily break with prolonged heat. The container also needs to protect the floor or table where placed and if necessary, a fire blanket or other heat resistant insulation will be placed under the container.
 - If a Fire Watch is required by EHS, the Event Organizer will assign an adult to monitor the event. Any personnel performing Fire Watch duties must be trained to use a fire extinguisher and know the location of the nearest one.

During the Ceremony:

- Ensure the smudge stick is in control of the person conducting the ceremony. Don't leave bowls, smudge sticks, candles, charcoal or other items used for smudging unattended.
- Extinguish smudge sticks or sweet grass braids on the container until burned out, or keep a little sand or soil in the bowl or shell to snuff them out.
- Smoke and some scents have the potential to create respiratory distress and/or allergic reactions. The Event Organizer must be present at all times and in the event there is a need to coordinate a response for medical reasons.
- The assigned Fire Watch must maintain visual contact with the person performing the smudge ceremony at all times.
- Observe all emergency procedures.

Post Ceremony:

- Ensure that the smudge is extinguished completely. The Event Organizer or assigned Fire Watch will be responsible for ensuring that 30 minutes after the end of the event there remains no source of ignition (i.e. that there is no open flame and no embers).
- Do not dispose of the smudge indoors and not until it is completely extinguished.
- Notify Facilities to reactivate the smoke alarm as soon as possible after the smoke has dissipated.

Emergency Procedures

All unintentional fires must be reported to U-M DPS at 911.

All injuries, accidents and illnesses related to the smudging ceremony **must** be reported to EHS. U-M employees must report all injuries to Work Connections [Illness or Injury Report Form](#).