



## Healthy Choice Food and Beverages at Madison Paper Industries: Informal Policy

**What:** Workplace healthy choice food and beverage policy for all meetings and training sessions where food and beverages are provided at Madison Paper Industries (MPI). Fresh fruit will be available as a choice when food is provided at company meetings and training sessions. Water and 100% fruit juice will be available as healthy choices when coffee and other beverages are provided at meetings or training sessions.

**Why:** Doughnuts and coffee were consistently being provided by the Guest House Caretaker for breaks to employees in attendance at meetings and training sessions. It was recognized by the Wellness Group at MPI that poor nutrition is a risk factor for preventable disease. Offering fresh fruit, water and 100% fruit juice provides support for and encourages employees to eat healthy food during the workday and increases the opportunities for employees to eat five servings of fruit per day. The healthy choice food and beverage policy is in place to demonstrate that healthy behaviors are closely linked with employee performance.

**Who:** Madison Paper Industries is a manufacturer of supercalendared papers employing 270 people in the town of Madison, Maine. MPI has had a somewhat active Wellness Group since mid-1999. The group was formed to address concerns specifically related to an increased incidence of cancer diagnoses among employees and their dependents and increasing healthcare costs. Group members consist of employees from all levels of the company, both salaried (exempt and nonexempt) and unionized. Twelve employees participate regularly in the group. Leadership of the group is assigned to a Safety and Health Professional. That person holds a valid Registered Nurse's license. The Director of Human Resources and the Manager of Safety and Security are both active members of the group. This group became increasingly active when awarded the CDC Cardiovascular Infrastructure Grant in November 2001. Previous to the grant, the group did not have its own working budget.

**How:** The initial focus of the group was to address the risk factors of preventable disease. Poor nutrition being a risk factor of preventable disease was considered. Healthy choice offerings were not initiated until after the grant work plan was developed with good nutrition being a goal of the plan. The Wellness Group Leader personally invited the Guest House Caretaker to join the Wellness Group. At a future meeting the idea of providing fresh fruit, water and 100% juice was introduced. The Guest House Caretaker agreed to entertain the idea and provide the fruit, water and juice. The offerings were inconsistent. The Caretaker attributed the inconsistencies in the offerings to lack of people making the choice to eat and drink the healthy choices. The leader of the group stressed the need to make the choices consistently available. Through several conversations and repeated requests the healthy choices are being offered consistently. There has been no formal communication that the healthy choice offerings are available.

**When:** Healthy choice offerings at all training sessions and meetings where food and beverages are provided were made available initially December 2001. The initial idea was presented in November 2001. The offerings have been consistent since about March 2002.



## Healthy Choice Food and Beverages at Madison Paper Industries: Informal Policy *(continued)*

**Lessons Learned:** The process of offering the healthy choices was relatively easy since other foods were already being provided. Having one or two specific people providing the foods and beverages covered the administrative need. The biggest obstacle was the buy-in of the Guest House Caretaker regarding the need to make these offerings available on a consistent basis at every meeting or training session where food and beverages were provided. This policy ensures healthy choices for those who may be on restricted diets, i.e., those with diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, etc. It supports those who are attempting to make healthy choices and encourages healthy eating and good nutrition. Specific requests for healthy meals are honored.

**Resources:** MPI owns and operates a company guesthouse. One full-time employee and a contracted part-time helper operate the guesthouse. The guesthouse workers provide snacks and meals for employees during meetings and training sessions. The guesthouse also provides housing, meals and snacks for customer and owner visits.

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**Future Plans:** Presently this is an unwritten, informal policy. It is the intention of the Wellness Group to make this a formal written policy. Our intention is to continue to provide healthy choice food and beverages at all meetings and training sessions whether this remains an informal or becomes a formal written policy.