

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION UNIFORMS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: To replace the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Handbook 3012 regarding wearing uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE) in VA national cemeteries.

2. SUMMARY OF CHANGES:

a. This directive clarifies the roles and responsibilities of NCA program offices responsible for procuring, issuing, maintaining, and accounting for uniforms and PPE for NCA employees.

b. This directive updates references to legal authorities, other policy guidance, and office titles.

c. This directive removes requirements to provide uniform items and PPE to compensated work therapy program (CWT) participants and updates policies for bulk purchases for prescribed items, and embroidery or printing of cemetery identifying information on prescribed items.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: National Cemetery Administration, Office of Cemetery Operations, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for the contents of this directive. Questions may be referred to Cemetery Operations at ncacemeteryoperations@va.gov.

4. RELATED PUBLICATIONS:

a. NCA Directive 7700, National Cemetery Administration Occupational Safety and Health Program (January 14, 2019);

b. Master Agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the American Federation of Government Employees (March 2011).

5. RESCISSION: NCA Handbook 3012, VA National Cemetery Uniforms and Special Clothing (June 10, 2010).

6. RECERTIFICATION: This directive is scheduled for recertification in March 2025.

/s/ Ronald E. Walters
Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs

Distribution: Electronic

**NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION UNIFORMS AND PERSONAL
PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

1. PURPOSE/AUTHORITY:

a. This National Cemetery Administration (NCA) directive describes the mandatory requirements for furnishing and servicing employee uniforms, designates the employees required to wear a uniform, and describes the major articles that make up the uniform.

b. The statutory and regulatory authorities governing this directive are sections 5901 through 5903 and 7903 of Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.); and, section 591.103 of title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

2. POLICY:

a. It is NCA policy to provide uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE) to employees to promote a professional appearance, and to ensure safe and healthful work environments in compliance with Federal laws, Executive Orders, and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policies governing procurement and occupational safety and health (including NCA Directive 7700, National Cemetery Administration Occupational Safety and Health Program (January 14, 2019)).

b. NCA will use appropriated funds to provide employees with uniforms, which are subject to federally-imposed spending limits. See Appendix A, **Uniforms for NCA Employees**, for specific information about required uniform items for different employee types.

c. NCA will use appropriated funds to provide employees with PPE. Employees are prohibited from spending out-of-pocket for such items in accordance with VA financial policies. See Appendix B, **Personal Protective Equipment for NCA Employees**, for specific information about PPE items for different employee types.

d. Either a District Executive Director or a Cemetery Director may establish a spending-cap for providing PPE to individual employees. However, when a District Executive Director sets a spending-cap, cemeteries in that district may only establish a more restrictive cap.

e. NCA will not use appropriated funds to provide uniforms or PPE to participants of the Veterans Health Administration Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) and Transitional Work Experience (TWE) programs because they are not Government employees.

f. Information about the authorized use of cemetery or central office operating funds to purchase NCA-branded clothing items for employee use when performing NCA-authorized outreach functions will be addressed in NCA's public affairs policy.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **Executive Director, Cemetery Operations** is responsible for setting policy for the mandatory requirements for furnishing and servicing uniforms and PPE to employees.

b. **District Executive Directors**, for cemeteries under their jurisdiction, are responsible for:

(1) Approving or disapproving requests with justification submitted by Cemetery Directors to modify the number of uniform items furnished to their employees above the minimum established in this directive.

(3) Approving or disapproving requests with justification for expending cemetery operating funds beyond a spending-cap, if they have set one, for PPE for an individual employee (reference paragraph 4.a.(4)).

(4) Upon request, providing information to the Director, NCA Finance Service (or his or her designee) to support NCA's biennial audit of cemetery purchases or leases of uniforms or uniform items.

c. **Cemetery Directors** are responsible for:

(1) Providing mandated NCA uniforms to employees as specified in Appendix A (see paragraph 4.a.(2)).

(2) Providing mandatory-issue PPE to individual employees, or for their shared/common use, including items specified in Appendix B.

(3) Approving individual payment for or entering into a contract or lease to obtain routine dry cleaning, laundering, and/or maintenance of uniform items and PPE.

(4) Approving bulk purchases of prescribed uniform articles or PPE and counting such items against an individual employee's uniform allowance, or if applicable, PPE allowance.

(5) Approving or disapproving requests with justification for expending cemetery operating funds beyond a spending-cap, if they have set one, for PPE for an individual employee (reference paragraph 4.a.(4)).

(6) Conducting inspections of PPE items in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended schedule, where applicable, to maintain their serviceability and effectiveness in protecting employees.

(7) Completing and storing signed and dated copies of VA Form 10-1148, Employees Uniform and Property Issue Documentation, to account for all uniform items and PPE issued to employees.

(8) Selecting the color of the uniform and boots for their Federal Wage System (FWS) employees. Cemetery Directors may approve a different color uniform item,

such as the work shirt or cap, for employees performing the duties of a foreman so they can be identified easily in the field.

(9) Selecting the color(s) of PPE to be consistent across like items, unless local, departmental, or federal Occupational Safety and Health guidance require a PPE item to be worn in a high-visibility color.

(10) As needed, preparing and submitting to their district office a request with justification to modify the number of uniform items furnished to their employees above the minimum established in this directive.

(11) At their discretion, and while maintaining consistent safety levels, granting employees relief from wearing select uniform articles due to extreme weather or other exigent circumstances, such as permitting administrative employees to remove their blazers when performing duties outside in extremely hot or humid conditions.

(12) Upon request, and in coordination with their district office, providing information to the Director, NCA Finance Service (or his or her designee) to support NCA's biennial audit of cemetery purchases/leases of uniforms/uniform items, as well as disposal and method of disposal of uniforms and PPE.

(13) To the maximum extent practical, leveraging nationwide or regional contracts for uniform rental.

d. **Cemetery Employees** are responsible for:

(1) Maintaining, wearing, storing, and turning in their uniforms and PPE in accordance with this directive.

(2) Furnishing certain articles of clothing themselves, using styles and colors that maintain a professional and coordinated appearance when wearing their uniform and do not violate any local rules or restrictions governing the uniform, such as removing hats or caps when indoors. Items to be furnished by the employee include:

(a) Undergarments.

(b) Socks.

(c) Hose or tights.

(d) Sweaters, vests or shawls.

(e) General footwear (does not include specialty or safety footwear).

e. **Director, NCA Finance Service** is responsible for conducting a biennial audit of cemetery purchases/leases of uniforms/uniform items with nationwide input from District Executive Directors, Cemetery Directors, and NCA Contracting Service.

f. **Director, NCA Contracting Service** is responsible for establishing nationwide or regional uniform lease contracts based on requirements from Cemetery Directors and District Executive Directors.

4. GENERAL INFORMATION – UNIFORMS AND PPE. The following section provides additional information about NCA’s uniform and PPE policy, and guidance on the procurement, care/maintenance, accountability, and wearing of uniforms and PPE:

a. For the purposes of procurement, care/maintenance, and accountability:

(1) Uniforms will be made of durable material(s) suitable to the work being performed and the local climate. Employees will maintain and wear uniforms until they are no longer serviceable. There is no requirement for NCA to replace an employee’s uniform annually.

(2) Cemetery operating funds will be used to procure uniforms, the total cost of which cannot exceed the Maximum Annual Allowance per employee set by the Office of Personnel Management, implemented in 5 C.F.R. § 561.103. The current maximum annual allowance is \$800.

(3) Cemetery operating funds will be used to purchase PPE. Federal law does not impose a maximum annual allowance or any other spending-cap on PPE.

(4) Federal law prohibits employees from spending money out-of-pocket to cover the cost of PPE items, either in whole or in part. Where a cemetery or district office has established a spending-cap on mandatory-issue PPE and the cost of required PPE for an employee exceeds the cap, the employee must submit a request with justification for the additional expense through their supervisory chain to the authority that set the spending-cap for approval. (reference paragraphs 2.d. and 3.b.(1) and (2) above).

(5) PPE issued to individual employees or provided for shared or common use must be used, maintained, and stored by employees in accordance with their cemetery’s policy and procedures.

(6) Employees must return all uniform items provided by the cemetery in accordance with this directive to the issuing duty station under the following circumstances:

(i) The uniform items or PPE are no longer serviceable.

(ii) The employee is separating. In this case, the issuing cemetery should have uniform items and PPE cleaned for reissue provided they are still serviceable and would be appropriate for reuse.

(7) Employees may be liable for costs to care for and/or replace uniform items and PPE that are damaged or made unserviceable due to their negligence.

b. For the purposes of wear:

(1) A cemetery’s administrative employees and cemetery director will use a name badge of common design, style/type and size, which should always be worn when providing services to or otherwise interacting with customers, visitors and other stakeholders.

(2) NCA cemetery-identifying information may be embroidered or printed directly on or a patch affixed to the prescribed articles of clothing. Cemetery field employees will have their names affixed to their work shirts using embroidered or printed patches. Limited exceptions to use of the patch may be made when the work shirt material does not support a patch (e.g., the work shirt is a light-weight technical fabric). Any direct embroidery and printing on the uniform item should allow for removal and reuse if the item is in serviceable condition.

(3) Only VA or NCA-issued insignia are permitted for wear on an employee's uniform, to include patches and pins.

5. DEFINITIONS:

a. Employee. Full-time and part-time employees of VA NCA assigned to the Executive Schedule Pay System (ES), General Schedule Classification Pay System (GS), or Federal Wage System (FWS). Volunteers, trainees and workers who receive a stipend or salary from a source other than VA appropriated funds are excluded from this definition. FWS employees may be identified with one of the following job classification prefixes:

(1) WG/Wage Grade Employee, such as a Cemetery Caretaker.

(2) WL/Wage Grade Work Leader.

(3) WS/Wage Grade Supervisor.

b. Uniform. Distinct articles of clothing prescribed to be worn when performing certain duties or functions within the cemetery or when representing it.

c. Maximum Annual Allowance. The maximum annual dollar amount set by the Office of Personnel Management for the acquisition or purchase of a uniform, which applies to uniforms procured by an agency for issuance to employees.

d. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Items provided to protect an employee against injury or damage to their uniform. PPE does not include commemorative items such as cemetery-identifying polo shirts or hats primarily used for NCA-authorized outreach purposes.

6. REFERENCES:

a. 5 U.S.C. § 5901 (Uniform allowances).

b. 5 U.S.C. § 5902 (Increase in maximum uniform allowance).

c. 5 U.S.C. § 7903 (Protective clothing and equipment).

d. 5 C.F.R. § 591.103, Governmentwide maximum uniform allowance rate.

e. United States Office of Personnel Management website; Pay and Leave, Pay Administration Fact Sheet: Uniform Allowances (<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data->

[oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/fact-sheets/uniform-allowances/](#)); accessed April 1, 2019.

f. NCA Directive 7700, National Cemetery Administration Occupational Safety and Health Program (January 14, 2019).

g. Master Agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the American Federation of Government Employees (March 2011).

APPENDIX A – Uniforms for NCA Employees

Pay System(s)	Performing the Duties of	Item(s) Issued	Total Quantity Issued to Full-Time Employees	Total Quantity Issued to Part-Time and Collateral Duty Employees
ES & GS	Any Role/Responsibility	Name Badge	2	
GS	Cemetery Representative (Male Employee)	Blazer, Navy Blue	2	1
		Dress Pants, Gray	5 pair	2 pair
		Collared Dress Shirt, White or Light Blue, Long-sleeve or Short-sleeve	5	2
		Necktie, Navy Blue or Maroon	2	1
	Cemetery Representative (Female Employee)*	Blazer, Navy Blue	2	1
		Dress Pants or Skirt, Gray	5 pair	2 pair
	Business Attire Blouse, White or Light Blue, with or without a Collar	5	2	
FWS	Any Role/Responsibility**	Patch/Embroidery with Cemetery Name	7	3
		Patch/Embroidery with Employee First Name	7	3
		Work Pants, Full-length Leg	7	3
		Work Shirt: Collared or Crewneck; Long-sleeve or Short-sleeve	7	3
		Hat or Cap	2	1

Notes

* Cemetery directors and assistant cemetery directors are exempt and expected to wear their own business attire if performing the duties of a Cemetery Representative to distinguish themselves for easier identification.

** At the cemetery director's discretion, an employee performing the duties of foreman can wear a different color uniform item (such as a work shirt or cap) for easier identification in the field (reference paragraph 3.c.(8)).

APPENDIX B –Personal Protective Equipment for NCA Employees

Pay System	Performing the Duties of	Item(s) Issued	Minimum Quantity Issued to Employees*
GS	Cemetery Representative	Safety Shoes or Safety Boots, Black	1 pair
		Coat/Jacket, All-weather	1
		Coat/Jacket, Rain	1
		Safety Shoes or Safety Boots Insulated (Winter/Cold-weather), Black **	1 pair
		Coat/Parka, Winter **	1
		Hat, Winter/Cold-weather **	1
		Scarf and Insulated Gloves, Winter/Cold-weather **	1 set
FWS	Any Role/Responsibility	Safety Shoes or Safety Boots	1 pair
		Sweatshirt/Jacket, All-weather	1
		Safety Glasses/Goggles	1 pair^
		Safety Boots Insulated, Winter/Cold-weather **	1 pair
		Parka, Winter/Cold-weather**	1
		Insulated Work Pants, Winter/Cold-weather**	2 pair
		Hat, Winter/Cold-weather **	1
	Mechanic (Automotive, or Maintenance) or Gardner	Scarf and Insulated Gloves, Winter/Cold-weather **	1 set
		One-piece Coveralls	1
	Mechanic (Automotive, or Maintenance) or Gardner	Safety Chaps	1 pair
	Various Roles or Responsibilities ^	Ear Plugs	Shared/Common Use or Bulk Supply
		Safety/Special Gloves	
		Safety Bib	
Safety/Support Belt			
Rain Gear Set			
Hard Hat +			
Respirator ++			
Other PPE/Safety Clothing †	(see Note)		

Notes:

* Or as otherwise specified in existing labor-union agreement.

** The mandatory-issue requirement for this PPE item is limited to facilities affected by severe winter/cold weather.

^ For an employee requiring prescription safety glasses, also limit one pair per year unless their prescription changes sooner.

^^ Cemeteries may procure certain mandatory-issue PPE items in bulk for disposable use (e.g., ear plugs), or in limited quantities for shared use (e.g., safety bib).

+ Required for any employee performing the duties of an FWS role/function in an area at risk for falling or moving objects.

++ Required for any employee performing the duties of an FWS role/function in an area where chemicals are being applied.

† The list of PPE items in this Appendix is not exhaustive. Cemetery directors (or their designees) will issue any other PPE items required for an employee to perform their duties safely and securely.