

VA NATIONAL CEMETERY UNIFORMS AND SPECIAL CLOTHING

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: To make clarifications to National Cemetery Administration (NCA) procedures for wearing uniforms and special clothing in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries.

2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES: Major changes include:

a. Clarifying information about items that will/will not be provided by NCA and allowable costs;

b. Adding new responsibilities for Memorial Service Network and Cemetery Directors related to overseeing costs; and

c. Providing information related to Compensated Work Therapy workers.

NOTE: *New/revised information is indicated by a line in the left margin.*

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: National Cemetery Administration, Office of Field Programs, 810 Vermont Ave, NW, Washington DC 20420, is responsible for the material contained in this handbook.

4. RELATED DIRECTIVES AND HANDBOOKS:

a. VA Directive 7700 – Occupational Safety and Health (February 11, 2009)

b. VA Directive and Handbook 4080 – Government Purchase Card Policy (and Procedures) (December 29, 2008)

c. NCA Directive 7700 – NCA Occupational Safety and Health Program (September 18, 2006)

d. NCA Handbook 4080 – NCA Government Purchase Card Procedures (April 28, 2008)

5. RESCISSIONS: NCA Handbook 3012 – Uniforms and Special Clothing for National Cemetery Employees (January 29, 2007), is rescinded in its entirety.

6. RECERTIFICATION: This handbook is scheduled for recertification in June 2013.

/s/
Steve L. Muro
Acting Under Secretary
for Memorial Affairs

Distribution: Electronic

VA NATIONAL CEMETERY UNIFORMS AND SPECIAL CLOTHING

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

a. This handbook contains procedures for wearing uniforms and special clothing in national cemeteries and identifies the responsibilities of National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Cemetery Directors and cemetery personnel relating to uniforms and special clothing.

b. The statutory authority for this handbook is stated in title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), sections 2400(a) and 2404(a). 5 U.S.C. 5901(a) and 7903, and 29 U.S.C. 668(a), are related to provision of uniforms and the protection of personnel in performance of their assigned tasks. Other Federal agencies with related regulatory oversight responsibilities include the Office of Personnel Management (e.g., uniform allowances in title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), part 591) and the Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (e.g., standards in 29 CFR part 1910); and the Federal jointly-maintained Federal Acquisition Regulation at 48 CFR chapter 1 (VA Acquisition Regulation is 48 CFR chapter 8).

2. PROGRAM/POSITION FUNCTIONS

a. **Director, Office of Field Programs** approves/disapproves:

- (1) Changes in uniform color for full-time and collateral duty cemetery representatives;
- (2) Increases in item allocations; and
- (3) Any deviations from the requirements set forth in this handbook.

b. **Memorial Service Network (MSN) Directors** will:

(1) Approve/disapprove the appropriate type of coats to be issued to full-time and collateral duty cemetery representatives; the color scheme of uniforms for Federal Wage System (FWS) employees; and pins and/or patches to be worn on government-issued hats; and

(2) Conduct a biennial audit of cemetery purchases/leases of uniforms/uniform items and certify to the Director, Office of Field Programs, that all cemeteries under their jurisdiction have complied with the requirements of this handbook.

c. **Cemetery Directors** will:

(1) Provide protective clothing for employees, Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) workers, and volunteers, as necessary;

(2) Ensure that costs for all purchased/leased uniform items constitute the best value (in terms of quality, price, and performance) at the lowest overall cost; and

(3) Ensure that all requirements pertaining to uniforms and special clothing contained in this handbook are followed by each employee.

3. APPAREL

a. General Schedule Employees

(1) All General Schedule (GS) employees will wear appropriate attire and name badge that reflects a professional appearance for the cemetery function they are performing.

(2) Under special conditions, and with the written approval of the Director, Office of Field Programs, the Cemetery Director may approve deviation from business attire for GS employees. Extreme weather conditions affecting outside work may also dictate deviation from normal business attire - such as relief from jacket and/or tie during very high temperatures and humidity, or use of parkas and winter wear during freezing conditions. Business attire should be kept immediately available in case the need arises.

(3) NCA will provide a uniform or distinctive items of clothing for Cemetery Representatives or other employees who act as collateral duty Cemetery Representatives so they will present a uniform and professional appearance at committal services. This will help members of the funeral party to recognize cemetery employees during funeral processions and committal services. The items provided will be of reasonable quality and cost, and made of materials that are durable and suitable for the local climate.

(4) It is mandatory for employees who are provided Cemetery Representative uniforms to wear those uniforms and appropriate protective footwear when performing cemetery representative duties.

(5) Employees who act as collateral duty Cemetery Representatives will maintain at least one full uniform at the cemetery at all times so that it is always available for them to change into when they are required to perform Cemetery Representative duties.

(6) NCA will issue the following clothing items and personal protective equipment on an assigned basis to Cemetery Representatives and other employees who act as collateral duty Cemetery Representatives:

CLOTHING

Full-time Cemetery Representatives (Male)

Blazer, Navy Blue (2)

Trousers, Gray (5)

Business Attire White Shirts (5)

Tie, Maroon or Navy Blue (2 ties)

Name Badge (no more than 2)

Coat (one each type as approved by MSN Director: Winter Coat, All Weather Coat/Rain Coat)

Hat (one summer/one winter as approved by MSN Director as suitable for weather conditions and in keeping with decorum and dignity of cemetery)

Full-time Cemetery Representative (Female)

Blazer, Navy Blue (2)

Slacks or Skirt, Gray (5)

Business Attire White Blouse (5)

Name Badge (no more than 2)
Coat (one each type as approved by MSN Director: Winter Coat, All Weather Coat/Rain Coat)
Hat (one summer/one winter as approved by MSN Director as suitable for weather conditions and in keeping with decorum and dignity of cemetery)

Collateral Duty Cemetery Representatives (Male)

Blazer, Navy Blue (1)
Trousers, Gray (2)
Business Attire White Shirts (2)
Tie, Maroon or Navy Blue (1 tie)
Name Badge (no more than 2)
Coat (one each type as approved by MSN Director: Winter Coat, All Weather Coat/Rain Coat)
Hat (one summer/one winter as approved by MSN Director as suitable for weather conditions and in keeping with decorum and dignity of cemetery)

Collateral Duty Cemetery Representatives (Female)

Blazer, Navy Blue (1)
Slacks or Skirt, Gray (2)
Business Attire White Blouse (2)
Name Badge (no more than 2)
Coat (one each type as approved by MSN Director: Winter Coat, All Weather Coat/Rain Coat)
Hat (one summer/one winter as approved by MSN Director as suitable for weather conditions and in keeping with decorum and dignity of cemetery)

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Full-time and Collateral Duty Cemetery Representatives

Safety Shoes, Black (1 pair)
Safety Boots, Black (1 pair)
Prescription Safety Glasses (for employees who wear prescription glasses – limited to one pair per year unless the employee’s prescription changes)

NOTE: *The listing covers standard uniform issue. Approval to increase the allocation or change the color of uniforms to meet local conditions must be justified to and approved in writing by the Director, Office of Field Programs. Footwear purchased by the cemetery must be safety footwear.*

(7) Cemetery Representatives and other employees who act as collateral duty Cemetery Representatives will furnish the following suitable items of clothing to be worn with the uniform. Color of item should be an appropriate color to be worn with the navy blue/gray uniform:

Business Attire hose or socks
Sweater/Vest
Hat
Scarf
Gloves

(8) All employees having direct contact with the public will wear a name badge visible to the public, as approved by the Cemetery Director. Name badges will be consistent in size, style and type for each cemetery, and appropriate for the uniform color approved for use at that location.

b. Federal Wage System (FWS) Employees

(1) FWS employees (WS, WL, and WG), including temporary employees whose appointment exceeds 180 days, will wear, while on duty, work clothing that is uniform in design and color. The color should be appropriate for the area and season. The uniform items provided will be of reasonable quality and materials that are durable and suitable for the local climate at the lowest reasonable cost. Each FWS employee will be issued the following clothing and personal protective equipment items on a loan basis:

CLOTHING

Trousers or slacks, long leg only (minimum 5 pair)
 Shirts, short or long sleeve (button down, polo, and/or tee shirts, as appropriate for local climate) (minimum 5 each)
 Jacket, style suitable for prevailing weather conditions, e.g., windbreaker, parka, (1 each style)
 One-piece coveralls, if authorized by Cemetery Director (1 each)
 Hat or cap suitable for prevailing weather conditions (e.g., baseball style, watch cap)
 - one suitable for summer, one for winter (if appropriate)

NOTE: *Each cemetery will use one color scheme for FWS employees, as approved by the MSN Directors, except that Foremen/Work Leaders may wear distinctive uniform items, such as different colored shirts, for easy recognition.*

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Shoes, Safety (1 pair) *(or as otherwise specified in existing labor-union agreement)*
 Boots, Safety (1 pair) *(or as otherwise specified in existing labor-union agreement)*
 Goggles
 Special Gloves
 Safety Belts
 Ear Plugs
 Rain Gear
 Hard hats (for employees working in areas with the risk of falling objects)
 Prescription Safety Glasses (for employees who wear prescription glasses – limited to one pair per year unless the employee's prescription changes)
 Respirators and clothing appropriate for type of application work performed (for pesticide applicators)
 Other equipment as suitable for required job function(s)

(2) It is mandatory that FWS employees wear the Government-provided work clothing and government issued hats to maintain a uniform appearance at the national cemetery. The use of pins and/or patches to adorn government-issued hats is at the discretion of the Cemetery Director with final approval of the MSN Director.

(3) Cemeteries may provide coveralls for mechanics, maintenance mechanics, and gardeners to provide additional protection from grease, lubricants, ground chemicals and the like. These coveralls are in addition to the regular uniform and should be used only when additional protection is required.

c. Compensated Work Therapy (CWT)

(1) CWT workers at national cemeteries are not considered full-time staff and do not receive a full uniform. Cemeteries may, as appropriate, provide CWT workers with T-shirts, hat or cap (suitable for prevailing weather conditions), safety goggles, ear plugs, and work gloves. It is acceptable for the local VA Medical Center (VAMC) to provide these items; but cemeteries may not lease or purchase uniforms for CWT workers.

(2) The local VAMC must provide CWT workers with appropriate safety shoes.

d. Special Clothing for Extreme Weather Conditions

Cemeteries where extreme cold temperatures are common may procure outer clothing garments, including coveralls, headwear, face covers, gloves, and footwear for employees assigned functions or tasks that will expose them to the elements for prolonged periods of time. The color of these items should match the uniform color or provide for high visibility when it contributes to the safety of the employee. Special clothing may be worn only in performance of official duties and only on those days when the outside temperature dictates.

4. COST, ISSUING AND MAINTENANCE

a. All NCA-furnished clothing, including outerwear and personal protective equipment, will be worn only in the performance of official duties, or to and from work.

b. The cost of standard uniform issue items is limited by statute. (Whenever possible, items should be purchased when prices are advantageous to the government, i.e., when on sale.)

(1) The allowances for initial outfitting of staff are limited to a maximum of \$800 for full-time cemetery representatives, \$600 for FWS employees, and \$500 for collateral-duty cemetery representatives.

(2) NCA-purchased/issued items of clothing and rental uniforms will be replaced when they are unserviceable on an item-for-item basis, as determined by Cemetery Directors. The maximum annual allowance to replace items is \$400.

(3) The cost of leased uniforms should be advantageous to the government and should not exceed \$600 per employee per year.

c. Personal protective equipment does not fall under the uniform allowance limitation; the MSN Safety Officer can provide more information regarding these items.

(1) Due to the nature of work performed, foot protection should be provided to both GS and FWS employees when there is a danger of injury from physical or electrical hazards, in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Standards published in title 29, Code of Federal Regulations, section 1910.136 (available electronically at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>).

(2) For cemeteries located where winters are severe, outerwear may also be considered a personal protective equipment item. For FWS employees, protective clothing other than shoes generally includes items furnished to safeguard against exposure to unusual inclement weather and/or possible injury, such as goggles, special gloves, masks, etc.

d. Required items of clothing can be provided either through purchase or by a contract with a uniform vendor to rent uniforms. If clothing is purchased, it is up to the employee to launder and maintain the items in proper condition. Items requiring dry cleaning will be cleaned at NCA expense. Clothing provided under a uniform contract will be laundered weekly by the contractor.

e. All Government-furnished clothing items remain the property of VA and must be maintained properly by the employee and returned when no longer serviceable or required for official duty. Rental uniforms remain the property of the contractor and must be returned when no longer required for official duty or at the end of the contract period. Employees will be required to reimburse VA for loss or damage to government-furnished and/or rental uniforms caused by their own negligence.

f. VA Form 10-1148, Employee Uniform and Property Issue Documentation (available in hard copy from the local servicing medical center, or electronically at <http://vaww.va.gov/vaforms/>), or a computer inventory system/database approved by the Cemetery Director will be used to account for all NCA-furnished clothing, including safety and protective clothing.