United States Department of Agriculture
Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration
Federal Grain Inspection Service

Directive

4735.2 November 28, 2016

UNIFORM AND IDENTITY APPAREL AND DRESS CODE POLICY

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1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes a standard dress code policy and a uniform and identity apparel program for Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS), Field Management Division (FMD) personnel.

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This directive revises the dollar value of the annual allotment granted to eligible field employees for ordering uniforms and the number of hours-worked required for part-time and intermittent employees in order to participate in the uniform program. This directive is also updated to remove outerwear, gloves, hats, and pants from the program in accordance with the appropriations law (Comp. Gen Decision: B-289683, Oct. 7, 2002). This directive supersedes FGIS Directive 4735.2, dated 10-30-2015.

3. BACKGROUND

The Federal Grain Inspection Service has a longstanding employee clothing program. Prior to the establishment of FGIS, the Grain Division of the Agricultural Marketing Service provided coveralls to agricultural commodity graders who performed export stowage examinations to ensure their safety and provide ready identification as Federal inspectors. In response to requests from inspection personnel and to increase the professional appearance of FMD personnel, FMD in cooperation with the National Council of Federal Grain Inspection Locals, established a 1-year pilot clothing program in the New Orleans area that provided expanded clothing choices to employees. The pilot was designed to determine employee interest and obtain experience in implementing a voluntary clothing program. The pilot proved so successful that it was expanded to all Field Offices. Subsequently, the policy was revised to address specific spending limits for eligible employees and requirements for type of clothing to be worn by employees.

FGIS management believes that the safety and professionalism of its employees are of paramount importance. To this end, FGIS issued this directive to establish a mandatory uniform and identity apparel program that enhances the professional appearance and safety of FMD field personnel.

4. POLICY

It is FGIS policy that all FMD field employees who have regular contact with our customers and the public must always present a professional appearance in the performance of their duties. A standard mandatory dress policy benefits our customers by ensuring that official services are provided by readily identified FGIS inspectors.

The current FMD uniform program provides an annual allowance for eligible and participating employees to purchase specified uniform items from an FGIS contracted vendor. Employees eligible to participate in the uniform program include all permanent full-time (including seasonal) inspection personnel and all part-time and intermittent agricultural commodity aids and technicians who have worked for FMD for at least 1,280 hours within the last 2 years. All eligible employees and all intermittent employees that have been provided the uniform by the Field Offices required to follow the uniform dress code policy in performance of their duties. The uniform required is provided in the clothing catalog: polo or oxford style shirts, T-shirts, and coveralls. T-shirts with the USDA logo that are provided in the clothing catalog may only be worn during stowage exams and manual sampling performed outdoors (e.g., probing, Ellis cup, and pelican sampling; there will be no exceptions). Embroidered shirts that are provided through the clothing program are the only acceptable shirts. Shirts must be purchased through the clothing program with the USDA logo on them to identify employees. Employees are encouraged to continue to dress in the navy or khaki slacks, although this is not required. Dark blue jeans with no holes, no writing, and no excessive wear are acceptable.

Under the directive, an allotment of $200.00 is granted to all eligible field employees after the beginning of each fiscal year (FY) (approximately November 1) for purchasing uniforms from an approved catalog that is available on the Agency's internal website. All clothing must be purchased through the clothing website before August 1st of each FY. Unused allotments are not carried over to the next FY and are not reimbursable to the employee. Clothing that meets the new uniform requirements that was purchased in prior year's clothing program is acceptable. Additionally, FGIS provides up to an additional $100 for steel toe work boots every 2 years at a maximum. Employees must purchase the boots and present a sales receipt and accompanying SF-1164 to the Field Office manager for reimbursement of the cost of the boots or $100, whichever is lower. Boots must be purchased and reimbursements submitted before August 1st of each FY.

On or after November 1 of each FY (provided adequate funding is available for the uniform program), eligible employees will have internet access to the Agency-designated supplier's catalog of approved clothing and the custom order form. Eligible employees who receive their $200 annual allotment for approved purchases are responsible for placing their own orders, making exchanges, or returning incorrect orders directly with the Agency-designated supplier. Eligible employees are also responsible for providing the packing slips within five working days upon receipt to the Field Office uniform coordinators. The FGIS approved uniform catalog can be viewed on the Agency's internal website at www.usda-gipsauniform.com (FGIS Uniform Catalog) after the employee has established an account. Employee ordering ceases at the end of July to allow for the FY ending accounting process.

Participating employees are responsible for repair and cleaning of their uniforms. Agency supplied mandatory uniforms are required to be worn only while performing official duties, including appropriate meal periods, commuting between work locations, etc.

The Field Office manager will order, on a yearly basis, additional shirts to outfit new hires and part time and intermittent employees who otherwise are not eligible to participate in the program but are required to follow the uniform dress code policy. Employees covered under the mandatory clothing/uniform program are required to participate and must adhere to requirements as specified in the directive. Failure to follow these instructions will reflect in performance appraisals.

Examples of Clothing That Will Not Be Permitted

- Excessively worn clothing of any kind
- Holes in clothing
- Athletic clothing such as sweat pants, gym pants, yoga pants, leggings, or gym shorts
- Camouflage clothing
- Open toed shoes or sandals
- Overly revealing or provocative attire
- Tank tops, cut off shirts, shorts, cut off pants
- T-shirts (with the exception stated under POLICY on page two of this directive)

Departures from this policy are not permitted. Employees reporting for work in unacceptable attire will be required to change their clothing before performing assigned work. If the employee is unable to change without disrupting the flow of work, the employee may be sent home without pay or placed in leave status until the employee can return to work wearing proper attire. Repeated occurrences of reporting to work in nonconforming attire will result in disciplinary action.

Return Policy and Instructions

FMD employees must follow the return policy and guidelines outlined by the clothing vendor. Generally, unaltered, unworn, and unlaundered items that do not meet expectations of quality or performance may be returned to the vendor within 30 days of receipt. Employees may make one return/exchange per fiscal year at FGIS expense. Additional returns will be at the employee's expense. The Field Office may have sizing examples available of several embroidered items that employees can try on prior to placing an order.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

Direct any questions concerning this directive to Sherri Murphy, Policies, Procedures, and Market Analysis Branch at Sherri.I.Murphy@usda.gov (202) 720-4684.

/s/ Samantha Simon

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