

# **STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE FOR STATION/WORK UNIFORMS**

## **EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

BY: Len Vander Wyst  
Fire Chief  
Neenah Fire Department  
Neenah, WI

An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy as part of the  
Executive Fire Officer Program

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## ABSTRACT

Station/work uniforms for fire departments have been traditional through the years with very little change regarding the safety of the fire fighters who wear uniforms. The problem was that the Neenah Fire Department (NFD) had maintained that traditional uniform concept without researching the need for change. Current safety standards were not included in the old uniform clothing policy creating additional concerns. The purpose of this research project was to evaluate the need for change, and if necessary, develop a new Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) for station/work uniforms. A review of our present policy and a determination concerning the practicality of meeting the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1975; Standard on Station/Work Uniforms for Fire Fighters was necessary. Historical, descriptive, evaluative, and action research methods were utilized to answer the following questions:

1. Should the existing policy for station/work uniforms used by the NFD be updated to include new safety standards?
2. Would the employees of the NFD accept changes in the traditional station/work uniform policy already in place, and do they favor including NFPA 1975 in an updated SOG?
3. Should NFPA 1975 be the accepted standard with respect to station/work uniforms worn by Neenah Fire Fighters?
4. Is liability for the City of Neenah an issue that will affect a decision concerning compliance with NFPA 1975?
5. Do other fire departments comply with NFPA 1975 and what are their reasons for compliance or non-compliance?

The findings of the research indicated that while fire departments are familiar with NFPA 1975, very few departments are following the Standard. The high cost of complying with the Standard was the reason for non-compliance. While there is always a liability factor involved, non-compliance was the choice of the majority of departments surveyed. Employees of the NFD were opposed to complying with NFPA 1975, however, employees were open to some changes in the existing policy for uniforms.

The recommendations from this research were that the existing policy within the NFD was updated to accommodate a more casual yet professional uniform appearance. Appropriate time periods during the work day were established for specific uniform items, and public relation issues were addressed. Safety concerns were addressed by updating turnout gear worn by all personnel and not through compliance with NFPA 1975.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Neenah Fire Department (NFD) recognized and developed a uniform clothing policy for station/work uniforms many years ago. The NFD is very involved in the community with fire prevention, inspections, and educational programs making personal appearance a priority. Fire suppression activities, while seldom a major problem, were also a concern when considering proper dress for daily activity. The major problem the NFD faced was updating the uniform clothing policy and deciding whether the new policy issued in a Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) format, should conform to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1975 Standards for Station/Work Uniforms for Fire Fighters.

The purpose of this research project was to develop an updated policy for station/work uniforms in a SOG format to be used for all future guidelines. The newly created SOG will need to be accepted by department personnel, and a determination must be made concerning compliance or non-compliance with NFPA 1975 Standards.

Historical, descriptive, evaluative, and action research methods were utilized to answer the following questions:

1. Should the existing policy for station/work uniforms used by the Neenah Fire Department be updated?
2. Would the employees of the Neenah Fire Department accept changes in the traditional station/work uniform policy already in place, and do they favor including NFPA 1975 in an updated SOG?
3. Should NFPA 1975 be the accepted standard with respect to station/work uniforms worn by Neenah Fire Fighters?

4. Is liability for the City of Neenah an issue that will affect a decision concerning compliance with NFPA 1975?
5. Do other fire departments comply with NFPA 1975 and what are their reasons for compliance or non-compliance?

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1975 Standard on Station/Work Uniforms for Fire Fighters 1994 Edition will be reviewed. Surveys including twenty-five (25) international fire departments, eighty-three (83) State of Wisconsin fire departments, and an internal survey of forty-one (41) City of Neenah Fire Fighters will assist with a determination on the proper SOG for the NFD.

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The NFD has been a professional and very traditional department. In 1996, the City of Neenah hired me as its first “outside” fire chief. A different perspective was in order, and change was viewed with optimism and caution within the organization. While much updating has been accomplished, an entire review and update of department policies which will change policy procedure to a Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) format was essential. The Executive Development course compelled me to look at internal issues, and take steps towards updating written procedures and practices. With a strong emphasis on public safety and education, the policy for station/work uniforms was considered to be one of the most important guidelines needing review. A complete review and update of policies would enhance the future direction of the NFD.

The NFD Safety Committee had been meeting regularly to discuss numerous internal safety issues. The safety committee is comprised of three union fire fighters and the Deputy Chief of Training. One item consistently on the agenda for the safety committee was the NFPA 1500 Standard on

Firefighter Safety and Health. This standard refers to the uniform standards established through NFPA Standard 1975.

This research was relevant to the Executive Development course in that skills developed from the course including teambuilding and leadership were utilized during the research. By surveying the personnel of the NFD, they had involvement in the decision process helping to build a team and develop an accepted SOG. Having all employees involved builds a foundation upon which successful programs can be built. As the leader of the department, I must review internal policies and procedures, and through my direction, I can enhance the professional image of the NFD. The quality of the services provided includes action oriented tasks as well as the affect of a professional image. Safety in completing assigned tasks including clothing worn by personnel, are key issues that were addressed. Quality within the organization and quality of service as perceived by the public we serve are both considered important for the executive leading a department into the twenty-first century.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Publications concerning work uniforms were limited, however, by surveying other departments and receiving an excellent response, ample information was obtained. The Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy (NFA) did have two Executive Fire Officer (EFO) research papers that were deemed appropriate for this topic. A search for articles available was also conducted, and information obtained through various publications was used.

The purpose of NFPA Standard 1975, is to provide members of the fire service with station work uniforms that will not contribute to burn injury severity (NFPA, 1994, p. 1975-4). This standard does not include clothing items that are intended for use as underwear, socks, shorts, dress uniforms,

and outerwear jackets. To say that adhering to NFPA 1975 will fully protect all fire fighters, would not be a correct statement. Station/work uniforms compliant only with NFPA 1975 are not primary protective garments and cannot be relied on to provide full protection. Although it is true that flame resistant garments do not offer complete and total protection, they do provide a critical layer of extra protection. In order to comply with NFPA guidelines in the United States, fire fighters must wear fire resistant station wear beneath their turnout gear when battling a fire (Hirschman, 1993).

Another area of concern centered around personal appearance and professional image portrayed through the uniforms worn by fire fighters. Fire resistant garments are not permanently pressed, so some may appear wrinkled after laundering, while some may also pill (Hirschman, 1993). Readied with this information, it was clear that comments received from the surveys (Appendix A), would influence any recommended changes in the uniform guideline. Receiving actual information supporting this statement based on the experience of other departments certainly influenced final drafting of the department SOG.

Other research information included articles written by Ronny J. Coleman, California State Fire Marshal which appeared in Fire Chief Magazine. Uniforms center around the issue of packaging a person for the job they are trying to do. The package is not the product, but there are things that are appropriate in order to establish credibility, and the lack of uniformity often creates obstacles that are virtually impossible to overcome (Coleman, 1995). Remember that the fire service is a paramilitary organization where identity and authority are important. After reading the articles written by Mr. Coleman, it was decided beyond a doubt that it was important for the NFD to be uniform and professional. Most communities tend to equate our image with our abilities. A carefully thought out plan that allows flexibility in meeting work requirements, coupled with properly designed, constructed and



maintained uniforms can create a perception in the community that is valuable to the overall organization (Coleman, 1995). Every day Neenah Fire Fighters are in the community educating the public, conducting fire inspections, and responding to fire/rescue calls. Perception by the community we serve is important. This reasoning assisted with the timelines established in the new SOG for certain approved garments, keeping in mind the assigned tasks of the day. If your appearance is inconsistent with your message, you might not be heard (Coleman, 1995). Activities scheduled for the day are vital to knowing when and what to wear.

John D. Eddinger (1995) of the Boca Raton Fire-Rescue Department researched this same topic for the Executive Development course at the NFA. “Choosing the Right Station/Work Uniform” was the title for his project. Many articles related to appearance were discussed in his research project. Most articles selected by Mr. Eddinger related to Emergency Medical Services (EMS). While researching this topic at the LRC of the NFA, those articles relating to EMS were mostly relevant to appearance principles. The general opinion that appearance was relied on by the public in determining the quality of service they receive was echoed again. The perception factor and “professional look” of responders also serves to identify the firefighter. Mr. Eddinger’s paper also touches on another issue addressed in the research conducted for this study. That issue is the question of a more comfortable uniform style in the form of a golf-style shirt. While many departments are complimenting their traditional uniform shirts with a golf-style shirt, the department logo imprinted on the shirt provided the professional image which is important to maintain. Golf-style shirts approved for the NFD shall have the department logo printed on the front as a direct result of the professional image issue.

The research conducted for this project was similar in its findings with respect to non-compliance. The majority of departments do not comply with NFPA 1975 Standards. With the major

problem of expense being the primary reason for non-compliance, appearance and availability of uniforms were also noted as non-compliance issues.

Richardson (1993) states that “the need for fire fighters to be provided with clothing that will not cause injury in the course of their duties is evident, yet several constraints still prevent departments from being able to provide this protection to their personnel”. The constraints in 1993 still exist today as evidenced by the comments received (Appendix A).

Many questions have been raised by members of the fire service with respect to liability issues and the NFPA Standards. The existence of a standard places risk on any municipality with respect to litigation. Attorneys will use any resource available to them and Standards will be an issue where non-compliance may be considered to be unsafe for the employees it is written to protect.

Liability is merely another matter with which the modern fire service manager must be concerned. The better manager you are, the less legal risk you will have. By learning about the law and instituting those programs, forms and procedures which reduces the chances of getting into legal trouble, and training those under your supervision regarding their legal responsibilities, you will minimize your liability risk (Hogan, 1995).

## PROCEDURES

When selecting a topic for a research project, it became apparent that the topic should be one that would serve two purposes. Fulfilling the requirements of the Executive Development course, and assist the NFD with an internal issue. While reflecting on possible topics, I recalled the issue of uniforms appearing on agendas for shift meetings, staff meetings, and safety committee meetings. Although uniforms were discussed frequently, it seemed that all that took place was discussion with no action.

The topic choice was clear after discussing this issue with the instructors and sharing with them my problem statement to be sure it was appropriate. Loaded with the issue, I reflected on the desired outcome, which was to begin the process of reviewing department SOG's by looking first at our present uniform policy. Revising the present policy to suit the needs of the NFD was the short term goal of the research.. The revision would have to take into account external influence, internal support, and safety considerations.

The research was historical with a review of current SOG's in the Neenah Fire Department. A review of internal meeting agendas and minutes to determine an appropriate subject matter also took place. A literature review to assist the NFD with determining preferred uniform policies of other professional organizations and reasons for their adopted guidelines was also conducted.

The research was also action research with applying the information to the final uniform SOG. The final uniform SOG format would now be used for future SOG's developed by the NFD.

Evaluative research consisted of surveys of other fire departments to assist us in a determination of other practices that have succeeded or failed. The main research centered around surveys mailed out to fire departments in the State of Wisconsin (Appendix B), a survey of students enrolled in the Executive Development Course at the National Fire Academy (Appendix C), as well as an internal

survey of members of the Neenah Fire Department (Appendix D). The results of all surveys can be seen in Appendix E.

The internal NFD survey assisted in building a team approach to problem solving within the organization, and evaluated the desires of employees who are our internal customers. The surveys collected from other fire departments from the State of Wisconsin and Executive Development course students consisted of volunteer, combination, and fully-paid fire departments giving a clear picture of actual uniform guidelines most prevalent in today's workforce.

The surveys conducted enabled an excellent cross section of the fire service to be studied. The 25 students enrolled in the Executive Development course are not only from around the country and overseas, they afford an administrative view of uniform policies which can be different from subordinate fire fighters (Appendix C). The survey was completed by 62 of 83 Wisconsin fire departments (Appendix B) and provided an excellent mechanism for appropriate numbers to be gathered and a geographic conclusion as to whether location made a difference. It was determined that geographic location did not make a difference. The internal survey of 41 Neenah Fire Fighters (Appendix D) was completed by 36 fire fighters. This survey supplied the personnel with their own mechanism to be heard. I also utilized information obtained in Emmitsburg at the LRC of the NFA. Although minimal information could be found, there were two research papers available, several magazine articles, and all the NFPA Standards at my fingertips. With reference material in hand and available through interlibrary loan, I was able to support the findings of the survey results.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

One problem with the research was that departments surveyed included full-time, combination, and volunteer departments. While full-time departments often have uniform policies and procedures,

combination and volunteer departments do not force employees to adhere to a strict uniform policy. Combination and volunteer departments rely on individuals to respond from all walks of life to an emergency scene. It is impossible for those departments to require personnel to respond with fire resistive clothing when they may be responding in personal vehicles from their full-time place of employment. Because of the inherent problems with uniform guidelines in combination and volunteer departments, their needs and financial ability to support expensive clothing policies are limited.

Another limitation in the research was that departments surveyed were not asked if they were unionized departments. This could be an issue with respect to bargaining agreements. Fire departments having unions may have contracts that make it mandatory for the city to purchase the expensive fire retardant clothing items.

Limited research material was another limitation with this research project. Surveys were relied on to determine extent of compliance in the industry. Research material did assist in supporting opinions on the subject.

One assumption made was that departments surveyed were familiar with NFPA 1975 and had copies of the standard to review before completing the survey. Perhaps those departments not familiar with NFPA 1975 did not take the time to respond to the survey.

## RESULTS

A revised SOG for station/work uniforms was developed utilizing survey results, and studying reference materials applicable to the subject. The old NFD uniform clothing policy (Appendix F) needed to be updated and placed in a new format for Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG). The new Neenah Fire Department SOG on Station/Work Uniforms appears in Appendix G.

### Answers to research questions:

**Research question #1: Should the existing policy for station/work uniforms used by the Neenah Fire Department be updated?** The majority of City of Neenah respondents (58%), did not want to see changes in the existing uniform guideline. 42% requested changes with most comments received included in the comments Appendix A. Changes generally requested included greater flexibility in what is accepted and a broader range in time allotments for clothing options. All but two departments surveyed still held to the traditional uniform. The majority of outside departments that responded have however added to their former policies by allowing T-shirts, golf shirts, and sweatshirts to be worn at appropriate times.

The existing guideline should be changed based on the data received to allow more flexibility for times of accepted wear for certain clothing items, and a broader range of clothing available to wear. The traditional uniform should be kept for those public perception time frames that are considered very important.

**Research question #2: Do the employees of the Neenah Fire Department want a change in the traditional station/work uniform policy already in place, and do they favor including NFPA 1975 in an updated SOG?** Using the City of Neenah survey to answer this question, 88% of the respondents do not favor including NFPA 1975 as part of a new SOG. The

changes in the existing traditional uniform centered around adding to the list of acceptable wear to include T-shirts, golf shirts etc. (Appendix A). If there are changes in the present guideline, all respondents favored an implementation period. The exact time frame requested for an implementation period varied with the majority favoring two years for implementation. Safety does not appear to be a concern internally, as most members feel we are adequately protected with our turnout gear. Cost is a key concern with a minimal clothing allowance when compared to the cost of fire resistant clothing.

**Research question #3: Should NFPA 1975 be the accepted standard with respect to Station/work uniforms worn by Neenah Fire Fighters?** In reviewing the surveys received from all departments, the majority did not comply with NFPA 1975. There were some startling revelations in that some departments that did comply, reversed their decision and went back to a cotton blend uniform. Unsatisfactory wear, heat retention, and mostly cost were the key reasons for not complying with NFPA 1975. It would seem that the Neenah Fire Fighters have legitimate reasons for not wanting to comply with NFPA 1975, based on survey results from other departments.

**Research question #4: Is there any liability for the City of Neenah if personnel do not comply with NFPA 1975?** There always seems to be a liability issue with everything we do. NFPA Standards adopted by a municipality in ordinance form have the force of law. The City of Neenah has not adopted any NFPA standards. This does not imply however that the City is not liable. Non-compliance with NFPA Standards can be considered unsafe opening the door to litigation. Study the most cost effective, reasonable means to reduce liability. Your rules, regulations and procedures should reflect the most effective means for running your department, based on state-of-the-art standards to maximize safety and efficiency as well as to protect the rights of everyone with whom you deal (Hogan 1995).

**Research question #5: Do other fire departments comply with NFPA 1975 and what are the reasons for compliance or non-compliance?** Using the survey results from the students in the Executive Development course at the NFA and the results from the State of Wisconsin survey, the majority of the departments do not comply with NFPA 1975. 48 of the 62 State of Wisconsin respondents do not comply with NFPA 1975 (77%). 12 of the 18 Executive Development students that returned surveys did not comply (48%), while 6 of 18 respondents stated they were in compliance with NFPA 1975 (33%). Comments received can be reviewed in Appendix A. The usual stated reasons for non-compliance center on cost, availability, and wear/appearance problems.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study results were very similar to the findings of others discussed in the literature review. The common problems involved with NFPA 1975 compliance involved cost, wearability, availability, and heat retention. The study was also similar in its findings as far as the percentage of departments that actually complied with NFPA 1975.

The cost of the fire resistive uniforms is high because there is a reluctance by departments to purchase these uniforms and private industry will not enter the market for this reason. Because of the high cost, municipalities will attempt to have employees share in that cost and the employees do not favor a shared cost. The clothing allowance would most likely have to double for the fire fighters in Neenah in order to reach any agreement. Based on the survey results of the Neenah Fire Fighters, I would doubt that the bargaining unit would ever bring NFPA 1975 to the table because they lack desire to wear compliant uniforms in the first place. Negotiations with the bargaining unit employees would most likely break down over fire retardant uniforms because the City of Neenah would expect a cost



sharing arrangement, and it is clear by the survey results that union members do not favor compliance with NFPA 1975.

While evaluating the study results, it seems that there are strong disadvantages to complying with NFPA 1975. Some of the comments included in the surveys of other departments must be strongly considered. Those departments that were in compliance and then decided to reverse itself because of the problems associated with the clothing was strongly considered when committing to a final SOG for the NFD.

As a result of the study, the implications for the City of Neenah Fire Department will be minimal with respect to major changes in the uniform guideline. The study will have a positive impact on the Neenah Fire Department with respect to employee involvement in the decision making process. Fire Fighters will appreciate the input they are given, and they will come to realize that management does appreciate and understand that employees can make a difference. The Neenah Fire Department will not attempt to comply at this time with NFPA 1975, but we will have an updated SOG with a more relaxed, yet professional look with a more specific time frame for optional clothing attire.

Although not directly related to this study, to take advantage of the work being done on this project, it was decided to take a look at changes for the uniform patch we presently have on our uniform shirts. A recent vote was taken by the members and the patch design will change as a result.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The new SOG for Station Work Uniforms for fire fighters in the NFD should incorporate a professional appearance yet include a casual comfortable alternative for time periods not involving the public. The current traditional uniform is appropriate for those times when the general public is present including public education programs, fire inspections, open houses, and any other time when the perception of the public is vital. The casual clothing alternative time schedule should be adhered to in order to prevent the guideline from becoming loosely enforced causing an atmosphere that becomes too relaxed and unprofessional.. All clothing worn should be a minimum of 65% cotton blend material, with a goal of 100% cotton material for all clothing items.

The uniforms should not be NFPA 1975 compliant for numerous reasons. As the survey results show, cost is a major concern for various fire departments, and the NFD is no different. Negotiations in the future should include discussions of clothing needs for safety reasons, however, until appropriate comfortable, easy to care for, safe uniforms can be found, the City of Neenah will not pursue compliance with NFPA 1975. Another supporting reason for not complying is that nearly 100% of the respondents of all surveys stated they did not have any injuries or deaths directly attributed to the station/work uniforms. It seems that the risk of not complying is very minimal with respect to safety. The only variable is that liability is a concern if someone were to get hurt and it could be proven that non-compliance with NFPA 1975 attributed to their injuries.

The uniform guideline should be reviewed annually to be sure to keep up with any changes in the availability of better, more cost effective, safe uniforms. The new uniform SOG should be reviewed at all shift meetings and posted to be sure all personnel are aware of the new standard. There should also

be a grace period for complying to the new standard because especially in the fire service, change is hard to accept, and tradition and past practice usually surfaces for a short period of time.

## REFERENCE LIST

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM SURVEYS**

#### **City of Neenah Fire Fighters Survey**

(Changes in the present Uniform Clothing Policy)

- If the garments under your turnout gear are going to melt or burn, it (compliance with NFPA 1975) isn't going to make any difference, you're going to be cooked.
- As long as we have PBI or better turnout gear, compliance with NFPA 1975 is not necessary.
- I would like to see uniform shorts for summer and embroidered polo shirts and hats could be worn with denim jeans.
- Shorts and polo shirts.
- Dark blue golf type shirt - short sleeve; dark blue pants similar to present style to meet Standard 1975.
- Dress uniform should be tradition - dark blue double breasted coat - not present security guard look.
- Knit uniform shirts.
- Golf shirts in summer with shorts optional. After working hours - sweats, T-shirts, etc. depending on weather/temperature.
- Blue jeans and T-shirt with blue denim shirts to replace the present uniform. Blue jeans must be pre-washed so they don't fade. This uniform for station duties and training. Long 3/4 length trooper coats for winter, use while in public and inspections. Keep our present uniform for fire inspections and public education. Purchase dress uniforms for funerals, and must be required to purchase.

- Ongoing evaluation and or modification is healthy. Fire retardant station wear is probably not necessary. If we get into a condition where our personal protective equipment and self-contained breathing apparatus are compromised by a fire environment, fire retardant station wear will not make a difference at that point.

#### **Wisconsin Volunteer Department Comments (2 RESPONDENTS)**

(Reasons for non-compliance with NFPA 1975)

- Station uniforms are worn infrequently by volunteer members. Also issue has not been taken up by SOG Committee.
- Only use of a uniform is for special detail. We provide a full turnout to cover their normal street clothes.

#### **Wisconsin Fully Paid Departments (27 RESPONDENTS)**

(Reasons for non-compliance with NFPA 1975)

- Cost/expense factor mentioned (18/27 departments that responded).
- Too much trouble getting uniforms that are compliant.
- No history of problems with clothes under protective gear.
- Under firefighting conditions, fire personnel are required to wear full protective gear.
- Our contract with union states that any change in the uniform will cause the city to pay in full, therefore, no change -- no cost.
- Because it was not required.
- Working on compliance - researching Quartermaster system currently.
- We feel our turnout gear will provide needed protection on emergency calls without additional protection from station uniform.

- The station uniforms do not meet our total needs. Our personnel wear cotton T-shirts and sweatshirts for many activities. We wear full protective clothing at incidents.
- Uniform clothing is not exposed during emergency/training as full P.P.E. is worn. Maintenance and availability are also issues.
- We changed to fully compliant uniforms (Fireweed) in 1996. We had numerous complaints about the wear and the cost. We switched back to cotton/polyester in 1997.
- Lack of suitable uniforms.
- From a risk benefit perspective I have not seen significant data to warrant compliance.
- Cost, vendors, no need. Not IHLR 30 required.
- In order to comply, the uniforms must be Nomex or 100% cotton. One was very expensive and the cotton looked bad. We are in a complete envelope for our protective clothing so we wear a 65/35 blend of cotton and polyester.

### **Wisconsin Combination Departments (33 RESPONDENTS)**

(Reasons for non-compliance with NFPA 1975)

- High turnover rate.
- Continued appearance, durability/wearability and full protective clothing requirement on the fireground.
- We have attempted to comply but availability and price made it an unrealistic goal.
- Fire Fighters are required to wear complete turn out gear for all emergency calls.
- The quality of uniforms was substandard. We do require compliant turnout equipment.
- Most of the time, paid-on-call personnel are at home or work and do not wear a uniform. The department dress uniform is not compliant due to the infrequent use of the uniform.

- Unknown
- With an entire volunteer force responding, it is not feasible to expect members to arrive in station uniforms. To change into such uniforms at the station would have a negative affect on response time.
- City will not fund extra expense.
- Members wear a uniform only in the presence of public for training and public education.
- Only full-time personnel (3) wear uniforms on daily basis. All three positions are command staff (fire chief and two division chiefs).
- We rent uniforms from a service that do not meet heat/flame resistant standards.
- Still looking at new products.
- Both our shirts and pants are 65% polyester and 35% cotton. This makes the uniform permanent press. For wearability, appearance and maintenance for the Fire Fighters.
- Just have not so far. No real reason.
- Maintenance, length of use (life) - our uniforms are all cotton material and we have strict guidelines on use of protective clothing - we also have people responding from home and/or work who do not wear uniforms.
- We don't require Nomex work uniforms because of cost, unreliability after numerous washings and all responses are required to wear full protection bunker wear.
- No particular reason - part-time people respond from work or home in normal street clothes, off duty people respond in street clothes. Union not pushing it. Turnout gear required for fire responses.
- Quality of materials available, durability. They wear complete, approved turnout gear when responding.



- At one time we used Flamex and the Fire Fighters voted to discontinue use of Flamex because of wear problems and didn't look nice.
- Town had made the decision to make it personal choice for each individual.
- P.O.C staff are not assigned duty times, so it would only be worn for drills or assigned ambo duty shifts.
- We are in the process of redefining all of our SOG's.
- At this time, our uniforms are only worn at special events and occasions. We do not wear this uniform while fire fighting.

### **National Fire Academy Executive Development Students**

#### **(18 RESPONDENTS)**

(Reasons for non-compliance with NFPA 1975)

- Cost/expense factor mentioned (6/18 departments that responded).
- Difficulty incorporating this change into union contract/clothing allowance.
- I don't know why. Now that I am thinking about this I will look into it and see.
- Requirement for third party certification and label limits available suppliers and increases cost. We provide NON-FR 100% cotton which meets WA state labor and industry codes and standards.
- Too hot for south Florida - would lead to heat-related injury. Compliant uniforms are uncomfortable and too costly. We have quality bunker for fires.
- Availability - heat stress problems with Nomex.
- Polyester shirts and pants.
- We issue PBI protective clothing for use when exposure at a fire scene warrants. Example: action suppression and overhaul.

- We are studying a program of issuing uniforms with replacement as needed.
- The heat in Florida causes heat exhaustion problems utilizing fabrics that do not breath well; i.e., Nomex.
- Not applicable in Australia.
- Volunteers do not spend much time in the station.

**APPENDIX B**

December 1, 1997

Roger Melchior, Fire Chief  
Allouez Fire Department  
135 Dauphin Street  
Green Bay, WI 54301

Dear Chief Melchior:

The City of Neenah Fire Department (NFD) is reviewing our Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) addressing station/work uniforms. As part of a research project for the *Executive Development* course at the National Fire Academy (NFA), please see the attached "Station/Work Uniform Survey."

I am asking that you complete and return this survey to me by December 15, 1997. I have enclosed an addressed/stamped envelope for your convenience. I will combine this information with other fire departments in the State of Wisconsin. I will also include data from an internal survey of Neenah Fire Fighters. This information will be used to complete the research and assist the NFD with developing an acceptable station/work uniform guideline.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you would like a copy of the completed survey results, please complete the appropriate information on the survey form.

Sincerely,

Len Vander Wyst, Fire Chief  
City of Neenah Fire Department

Attachment

## APPENDIX B-1

**CITY OF NEENAH WISCONSIN  
FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STATION WORK UNIFORM SURVEY**

1. Name of fire department:\_\_\_\_\_
2. Fully Paid\_\_\_\_\_ Fully Volunteer\_\_\_\_\_ Combination\_\_\_\_\_
3. Does your department have a station work uniform Standard Operating Guideline (SOG)?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
4. Does your department comply with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1975 Standard on Station/Work Uniform for Fire Fighters?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
5. If your answer is yes to question #4, will you please explain any benefits or problems you have experienced with compliance:(please supply name of company you purchase from)  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If you answered no to question #4, please explain why you do not comply with NFPA 1975:  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you experienced any injuries that you can attribute to your station work uniforms?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you presently wear the “traditional” work uniforms with button shirt, badge, nametag, patches, etc.?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you wear a more non-traditional “golf style” shirt as your station work uniform?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
10. Please forward a copy of survey results to: (complete only if you would like a copy of results)  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C****MEMORANDUM**

August 13, 1997

TO: Executive Development Students

National Fire Academy

FR: Len Vander Wyst, Fire Chief

City of Neenah, WI

RE: Station Work Uniforms

The City of Neenah Fire Department (NFD) is reviewing our Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) addressing station work uniforms. As part of a research project for the Executive Development course at the National Fire Academy (NFA), please see the attached "Station Work Uniform Survey".

I am asking that you complete this survey and return to me prior to our graduation this Friday. I will combine this information with other fire departments in the State of Wisconsin. I will also include data from an internal survey of Neenah Fire Fighters. This information will be used to complete the research and assist the NFD with developing an acceptable Station Work Uniform SOG.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you would like a copy of the completed survey results, please complete the appropriate information on the survey form.

## APPENDIX C-1

**CITY OF NEENAH WISCONSIN  
FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STATION WORK UNIFORM SURVEY**

1. Name of fire department:\_\_\_\_\_
2. Fully Paid\_\_\_\_ Fully Volunteer\_\_\_\_ Combination\_\_\_\_
3. Does your department have a station work uniform Standard Operating Guideline (SOG)?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_
4. Does your department comply with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1975 Standard on Station/Work Uniform for Fire Fighters?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_
5. If your answer is yes to question #4, will you please explain any benefits or problems you have experienced with compliance:(please supply name of company you purchase from)  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. If you answered no to question #4, please explain why you do not comply with NFPA 1975:  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you experienced any injuries that you can attribute to your station work uniforms?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_
8. Do you presently wear the “traditional” work uniforms with button shirt, badge, nametag, patches, etc.?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_
9. Do you wear a more non-traditional “golf style” shirt as your station work uniform?  
  
Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_
10. Please forward a copy of survey results to: (complete only if you would like a copy of results)  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D****MEMORANDUM**

November 24, 1997

TO: All Personnel

FR: Chief Vander Wyst

RE: Station Work Uniform Guidelines

It is time for us to review our present Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) for station work uniforms. As part of a research project for the Executive Development course at the National Fire Academy (NFA), please see the attached "Station Work Uniform Survey".

I am asking that you complete this survey and return to me by December 15, 1997. I will combine this information with other survey results from the State of Wisconsin, and students enrolled in the Executive Development course at the NFA. This information will be used to complete the research project and assist us with determining if changes are needed in our station/work uniform SOG.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will share the results of the survey with all employees when my research project is complete. Please complete this survey "on your own". I would very much like to hear your personal opinion.

**APPENDIX D-1**

**CITY OF NEENAH  
FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STATION WORK UNIFORM SURVEY**

1. Do you believe the Neenah Fire Department should comply with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1975 on Station/Work Uniforms for Fire Fighters?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_

No\_\_\_\_\_

2. Would you like to see changes in the present Uniform Clothing Policy?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_

No\_\_\_\_\_

3. If you answered yes to #2, what changes would you like to see?

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4. Should there be an implementation period for any changes?

Yes\_\_\_\_\_

No\_\_\_\_\_

5. How long for an implementation period?(check one)

Years 1\_\_\_\_ 2\_\_\_\_ 3\_\_\_\_ 4\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX E

### SURVEY RESULTS

	STATE OF WISCONSIN FIRE DEPARTMENTS					
	83 Mailed Out 62 Responded					
	Fully Paid		Fully Volunteer		Combination	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Does your department have a station work uniform Standard Operating Guideline (SOG)?	22 81%	4 15%	0	2 100%	23 70%	10 30%
Does your department comply with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1975 Standard on Station/Work Uniform for Fire Fighters?	9 33%	18 67%	0	2 100%	4 12%	28 85%
Have you experienced any injuries that you can attribute to your station work uniforms?	0	27 100%	0	2 100%	0	33 100%
Do you presently wear the “traditional” work uniforms with button shirt, badge, nametag, patches, etc.?	24 89%	3 11%	2 100%	0	30 91%	3 9%
Do you wear a more non-traditional “golf style” shirt as your station uniform?	11 41%	15 56%	0	2 100%	13 39%	18 55%

	NATIONAL FIRE ACADEMY EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT STUDENTS					
	25 Distributed 18 Responded					
	Fully Paid		Fully Volunteer		Combination	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Does your department have a station work uniform Standard Operating Guideline (SOG)?	10 91%	1 9%	0	1 100%	3 50%	3 50%
Does your department comply with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1975 Standard on Station/Work Uniform for Fire Fighters?	4 36%	7 64%	0	1 100%	2 33%	4 67%
Have you experienced any injuries that you can attribute to your station work uniforms?	0	11 100%			2 33%	4 67%
Do you presently wear the “traditional” work uniforms with button shirt, badge, nametag, patches, etc.?	8 73%	3 27%			4 67%	2 33%
Do you wear a more non-traditional “golf style” shirt as your station uniform?	4 36%	7 64%			3 50%	3 50%

**APPENDIX E-1**

	NEENAH FIRE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES				
	Yes		No		
Do you believe the Neenah Fire Department should comply with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1975 on Station/Work Uniforms for Fire Fighters?	4 12%		32 88%		
Would you like to see changes in the present Uniform Clothing Policy?	15 41%		21 59%		
Should there be an implementation period for any changes?	32 88%		4 12%		
	YEARS				
	1	2	3	4	Other
How long for an implementation period?	2	6	2	3	3

## **APPENDIX F**

### **NEENAH FIRE DEPARTMENT**

#### **Old Uniform Clothing Policy**

OBJECTIVE: To ensure members of the Neenah Fire Department wear appropriate apparel, to enhance uniformity and professionalism during duty hours and while representing the Neenah Fire Department.

#### **I. DEFINITIONS**

- Uniform Shirt - Unitog sky blue with Neenah Fire Department patch on left shoulder.  
Captains and higher ranks, gold badge on left chest, gold name tag on right chest;  
Lieutenants, silver badge on left chest and silver name tag on right chest. A white or navy blue T-shirt may be worn under the uniform shirt.
- Uniform Slacks - Navy blue with plain pockets.
- Uniform Belt - Black not to exceed 1-1/2 inches in width, plain gold buckle for Captains and higher ranks, plain silver buckles for Lieutenants and lower ranks.
- Uniform Shoes - Black with black laces, able to take a polish and a shine.
- Uniform Socks - May be black, navy blue or white.
- Uniform T-Shirt Under Station Uniform Shirt - May be navy blue or white.
- Uniform T-Shirt - Navy blue with Neenah Fire Department insignia on left chest. Neenah Fire/Rescue on the back is optional.
- Uniform Sweatshirt - Navy blue with Neenah Fire Department insignia on left chest, full length sleeves and may have a hood.

- Uniform Jacket - Blauer Squad Jacket, navy blue Neenah Fire Department patch on left shoulder, department issued badge on left chest, name tag on right chest.
- Dress Uniform - White short sleeve, button down pleated shirt with left chest badge and right chest name tag and left shoulder patch, bell crown cap with cap badge, solid black tie 2-1/2 inch maximum width, black slacks plain black belt, black socks, plain toed black leather shoes, department issued white gloves when deemed appropriate, uniform jacket and black leather gloves during cold weather.
- Uniform Cap - Navy blue, Neenah Fire Department embroidered on face. Captain's rank and higher with gold embroidering on bill, all others - plain bill.
- Badges - Captains and higher ranks gold; Lieutenants and lower ranks silver.
- Name Tags - Captains and higher ranks gold; Lieutenants and lower ranks silver. Name tags shall state rank, first name, initial and last name.

## II. STATION UNIFORM

- A. Comprised of the following: uniform shirt, uniform slacks, uniform belt, uniform socks, uniform shoes, and name tag.
- B. Officers and Shift Inspectors shall all wear badges and name tags with a station uniform
- C. The station uniform shall be worn at all times while on duty with the exceptions of D, E, F, G, and H.
- D. Fire Department Training - Appropriate attire shall consist of a station uniform, or replacing the uniform shirt with a uniform T-shirt or a uniform sweatshirt, with the approval of the Duty Officer.

- E. Physical Training - Clothing worn during duty hours for warm up, physical training and cool down periods, shall be navy blue in color and bear a Neenah Fire Department insignia either on the left chest or left thigh. Acceptable clothing items include: sweatshirts, T-shirts, shorts and sweatpants. Shoes shall also be worn. Clothing worn during physical training in cold weather may vary depending on the individual's comfort, warm up and cool down periods shall be limited to 15 minutes each.
- F. Sleeping Attire - Appropriate clothing may vary depending upon the employee's comfort. However, when on a case or incident a station T-shirt or station sweatshirt shall be worn.
- G. Fire Fighting - Clothing worn by personnel during actual fire fighting, whether called in to the incident or already on duty shall be consistent to that of letter "D" above. If the provisions of letter "D" above cannot be met, then bunker pants and/or turnout coats shall be left on and remain closed.
- H. After 1600 Hours - After 1600 hours, attire consistent to letter "D" above may be worn. However, a station uniform shall still be worn while sitting a phone watch, while working on the control room computer, when visitors are in the building, during tours or at the Duty Officer's discretion.

### III. DRESS UNIFORM

- A. A dress uniform shall be worn during formal occasions when representing the Neenah Fire Department. These occasions may include, but not limited to: funerals, public education presentations, public relation events.

This policy is in no way intended to address the issue of personal protection clothing.

Clothing Available to Purchase Through Clothing Allowance

Uniform Shirt - Unitog #58059 or #58959

Uniform Slacks - Navy Blue

Uniform Shoes - Black

Uniform T-Shirt - Navy Blue

Uniform Sweatshirt - Navy Blue

Uniform Socks - White, Navy Blue, Black

Uniform Jacket - Blauer Squad Jacket

Underwear

Belt - Plain Black

Dress Uniform Shirt - White Short Sleeve, Pleated

Shoulder Patches - From Chief

Nylon Jacket - Navy Blue with Insignia

Uniform Cap - Navy Blue with Neenah Fire Department/Gold Embroidery

Tie - Black

Insulated Underwear

Insulated Coveralls

Overshoes

Insulated Vest - UNITOG #97040, Navy Blue

Name Tag

Bell Crown Cap With Badge

Dress Uniform Slacks - Black #

Sweatpants - Navy Blue with Logo

Gloves - Black

Socks - Insulated or Wool

Coveralls

Shorts - Navy with Insignia

**APPENDIX G****NEENAH FIRE DEPARTMENT****New Standard Operating Guidelines**

Category	Uniforms
Subject	Daily Station/Work Uniforms
Number	001
Date Adopted	January 23, 1998
Date Revised	
Fire Chief	Date

**OBJECTIVE:**

To ensure that all personnel exhibit professionalism in appearance by wearing approved station/work uniforms that are in excellent condition and worn at appropriate times as designated by the Fire Chief.

**GUIDELINE:****Station/Work Uniform**

The daily station/work uniform listed below shall be worn at all times between 0700 hours and 1630 hours Monday through Friday, Saturday 0700 hours to 1200 hours, and at all times when the public is present including but not limited to inspections, station tours, and public education programs.



The daily station/work uniform consists of the following:

- Sky blue long or short sleeve shirt with approved Neenah Fire Department (NFD) patch on left shoulder. Right shoulder shall have the appropriate medical patch as determined by the individuals personal certification (First Responder/EMT/Paramedic). Personnel not certified in a medical related field shall have the American Flag sewn on the right shoulder. Fire Officers shall have gold badge on left chest, gold nametag on right chest and appropriate bugles on shirt collar. Fire Fighters shall have the silver badge on left chest and silver nametag on right chest.
- Navy blue trousers.
- Black plain toed polished leather shoes.
- Black leather belt 1-1/2" or less in width, plain gold buckle for all Fire Officers, and plain silver buckle for Fire Fighters.
- Blauer Squad style jacket in navy blue with NFD patch on left shoulder, badge on left chest and nametag on right chest .
- Caps (baseball style): Fire Officers navy blue with gold scramble embroidered on bill of cap and Neenah Fire Dept. embroidered on face in gold. Fire Fighters navy blue with plain bill and Neenah Fire Dept. embroidered on face in silver.
- Cold weather cap trooper style navy blue. Cold weather gloves/mittens navy blue.
- Uniform socks may be black, navy blue, or white.

**Optional clothing items:**

**Optional clothing items listed below may be worn after 1630 hours during the work week and after 1200 hours on Saturday and Sunday, and may be worn during the work day for purposes such as training evolutions, physical fitness activities, station cleaning activities, and**

**other activities or reasons deemed appropriate by the Officer-In-Charge (OIC). Optional clothing items listed shall not be worn at times when the public is present including but not limited to station tours, inspections, and public education activities.**

T-Shirts: White or navy blue with NFD insignia on left chest may be worn at appropriate times in place of the uniform shirt and may be worn under the uniform shirt. Long sleeve T-shirts shall not be worn under short-sleeve uniform shirts.

Sweatshirt: Navy blue with full length sleeves (hood optional) with NFD insignia on left chest.

Sweatshirts shall not be worn under uniform short sleeve shirts.

Sweatpants and Shorts: Navy blue with NFD insignia.

Knit Golf Style Shirts: Navy or sky blue with NFD insignia on left chest.

Athletic Shoes: Shall be worn during physical fitness activities for safety purposes.

General Appearance Issues: While on duty, and an outer jacket is necessary, only the appropriate

Blauer Squad style jacket shall be worn. Turnout clothing may be worn for snow removal activities.

Civilian jackets and hats are not acceptable.

All clothing items shall be in excellent condition free from fading and clean. All clothing items shall be made of a minimum 65% cotton blend material. The OIC is responsible to be sure clothing items are in excellent order and repair to be certain a strong public image is maintained at all times.

Navy blue coveralls may be worn as determined necessary by the OIC.