

Running head: UNIFORMITY; HOW DOES THE CIRCLEVILLE FIRE

Uniformity; How Does the Circleville Fire Department Define it?

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that the appropriate credit is given where I have used language, ideas, expressions, or writing of another.

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Abstract

The fire service as a whole continually endeavors to foster a positive image locally, and nationally, publicly and internally. That image creates its own individuality as perceived by the citizens, elected and appointed officials, other agencies and fire departments, even our own employees have an opinion of the fire department they are a part of.

Part of that image is based upon the fire fighters appearance. Not all individuals are alike and fit the stereotypical illustration painted by society. We all come in many shapes and sizes and all of us have personal preferences regarding the uniforms we wear. Not every fire fighter regards their uniform and the way they display it as a reflection of themselves, their organization and the community they serve.

Fire Departments are reliant upon the uniform as a way of conveying to the public the fundamental nature of its task and traditions. It assists in defining emergency workers from the general public during the performance of their duties. Uniform styles repeatedly change along with our preferences and current trends towards safety.

A consequence of these transformations is represented by a whole host of different uniform variations utilized by personnel at the Circleville Fire Department (CFD). It is the source of substantial dissension when dealt with as a question of professionalism. Of the parties involved the two significant factors that create the dilemma are standardization of uniforms and the level of comfort.

The descriptive approach is the selected research method to verify the existence of the stated problem and identify possible solutions plaguing the CFD regarding the disparate dress of firefighters in uniform. The questions to be explored are (a) What perceptions does the public possess concerning the wear of uniforms by public servants?, (b) how can the executive staff at

the CFD cultivate the organizations image through the standardization of uniforms while maintaining the level of comfort and safety vital to the employees? and (c) how do other similar organizations approach the appearance of employees and perceive the purpose and impact of the uniform?

The procedures used to seek out a solution to the stated questions consisted of a literature review, three separate surveys and an interview. The results clearly demonstrated the advantages of having a clear and concise dress and appearance standard and it was recommended that a committee of interested parties be formed to prepare and recommend a formal policy.

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Introduction

The Circleville Fire Department (CFD) is a small organization consisting of nineteen paid employees located in rural Ohio. The department is committed to providing the people of Circleville with the highest quality emergency services. The department depends upon dedicated, well trained and versatile individuals acquainted with the many different services that the citizens of the community have come to expect.

The fire service as well as the CFD has always maintained an identity of being a skilled group of professionals and takes great pleasure in looking the part. Even in the earliest of times, uniforms were intended to distinguish an individual's connection to an organization. American culture has always been surrounded by uniforms and their presence seems to generate the pride and respect endowed to the wearer. A uniform can speak volumes, it conveys, honesty, integrity, courage, competency, and dignity. It is consistently exploited by various career fields such as retailers, hospitals, public transit, airlines and various government agencies such as postal employees to garner direct recognition from the public.

Outlaw motorcycle gangs utilize a consistent patch on the back of their leather jackets and reference this as displaying their colors. The noticeable appearance is a powerful symbol to represent the gang's identity, bragging rights and a warning to rivals (Sailor, ¶ 4).

It has become important to the fire service in the past, present and future to be clearly identifiable to the general public. Fire protection personnel have seen uniform fashions and designs change significantly through the years. What was once considered acceptable, through the use of formal wear while on duty, has been replaced with styles that represent comfort and afford advanced protection.

A consequence of these modifications is represented by a whole host of different selections by personnel at the CFD. On most days it is not unusual to come to the dining room table during a meal and see a diverse variation of uniforms among the personnel. Employees receive a significant allowance for replacement of uniforms however the lack of any formal guidance has generated a consistent lack of uniformity. With the many styles and brands available on the market today it has become difficult for firefighters to select an approved uniform. The research problem involves the multitude of uniform selections utilized by personnel at the CFD without any clear direction. It is the source of substantial dissension when dealt with as a question of professionalism. Of the parties involved the two significant factors that create the dilemma are standardization of uniforms and the level of comfort.

The descriptive approach is the selected research method to verify the existence of the stated problem and identify possible solutions plaguing the CFD regarding the disparate dress of firefighters in uniform. The questions to be explored are (a) What perceptions does the public possess concerning the wear of uniforms by public servants?, (b) how can the executive staff at the CFD cultivate the organizations image through the standardization of uniforms while maintaining the level of comfort and safety vital to the employees? and (c) how do other similar organizations approach the appearance of employees and perceive the purpose and impact of the uniform? The purpose of the research is to discover if the apparent inconsistencies of the uniform at the CFD detract from the expectations of the public and the firefighters and present potential solutions.

Background and Significance

The City of Circleville, which encompasses 6.2 square miles, is the largest city in Pickaway County, Ohio. The community is located in south central Ohio with a population of 13,485 residents (United States Census, 2000). The CFD was established in 1883 and currently consists of 15 fulltime and 3 part-time line employees and one administrator. The department is responsible for providing fire, rescue, emergency medical services and other assigned crucial life saving tasks. The organization also offers fire prevention, community risk reduction education and code enforcement.

Many photographs, the only source of information, from as far back as the first decade of the 1900's, suggested that CFD employees wore a standard uniform encompassing a white shirt, tie, dark pants, suit jacket and stove pipe style hat. Of the photographs viewed all had very little variance to that look and none had any form of personal identification or a departmental emblem. All personnel appeared to maintain a professional and uniform image although no dress code appeared to be implemented at the time.

The CFD maintained a consistent persona as far back as the previous fire chief, Wayne Mallott, 1990 to 1997, without any recognized directive. New recruits at the time were assigned three short sleeve button down duty shirts (with a collar and pockets) and the individuals name was embroidered in script lettering and a common patch attached to the left sleeve on the shoulder. They would also receive three pairs of duty style pants, a pair of black three quarter boots and three dark blue t-shirts with no identifying marks. All uniforms were navy blue in color. Along with these items employees were required to maintain a compliment of three full uniforms in a serviceable condition until separated from the CFD. All uniforms were of a polyester/cotton blend of material and required to be made and purchased from a specific

manufacturer. At the time this was the only approved combination of uniform items allowed to be worn by suppression personnel.

Prior to the promotion of Chief Mallott the CFD had no formal emblem in place, other than a generic logo worn on the shirts of firefighters. Upon promotion, Chief Mallott approached the local Circleville High School art department and students to appoint and design a logo for the firefighter's uniform. A committee was created consisting of the fire chief, a firefighter, a local elected official and a community member to select the emblem that best represented the City of Circleville, the CFD and the fire service. The final result was two-fold, a patch design that closely symbolized the traditions of the department and another logo that embodied the local communities claim to fame, a festival that was celebrated annually. The latter patch was only authorized to be worn during the time the event took place. In September of 1992 the new emblems were recognized as the official patch of the CFD and any new uniform shirts purchased were required to have this in place on the left shoulder. For a period of approximately two years it was not uncommon to have some personnel wearing the generic logo and others the new emblem until the older patch was eventually phased out.

A new fire chief was appointed in October of 1997 and his style of leadership created a more lackadaisical attitude towards uniform selection and wear. Within a short period of time after his promotion to the position, a select few employees began to push the envelope and try various uniform combinations. What was once recognized as an unwritten rule related to policy by the previous administration, had become a loosely followed directive with little question to the employee as long as their uniform was dark blue in color. Polo style shirts became a staple item in many fire fighters wardrobe, generic emblems on shirts re-appeared, several varieties of pants were introduced and black sneakers were commonly worn.

In the mid 1990's public service organizations began to see a sizable increase in the manufacturers, style, selection and fabric offered for uniforms. With that reality coupled with no strict enforcement or statute in place it was rare to see any two fire fighters exactly alike on any given day. Many of the employees regarded the change as one of comfort and self expression and often declared that no matter how the appearance or image was perceived it had no bearing on the quality of service given. Many considered the topic inconsequential and any mention of uniform wear by supervisors was construed as being overly fastidious.

Within the last five years a select few leaders within the organization have approached the administration to implement a dress and appearance policy to create greater accountability and standardization among the personnel at the CFD. The suggestion was well accepted but regarded as a low priority issue to be dealt with in the future. On several occasions when the topic resurfaced it was placed on a long laundry list of items to be accomplished but never received attention. In March, 2009 the researcher prepared a draft version of a dress and appearance standard that was distributed to CFD officers and the administration for analysis and consideration. The interpretations of the supervisory staff were mixed but generally indicated the policy as strict and abrasive. The central theme of their criticism regarded implementation of such a policy and if individuals would be denied wearing existing uniforms still in serviceable condition. To date the administration has given no feedback regarding the document.

The issue of consistency even to this day invokes great debate and passion. The topic of uniform choice specifically among employees of the CFD continues to be a subject of continued deliberation. The CFD remains focused on adapting with the transformation of the fire service but the challenges continue to expand annually. Research is imperative to gain insight into how a fire department can tackle and become progressive in nature. Many within the department

have an assorted variation of opinions how to best deal with the situation. Without a proper and precise examination into the subject the whole truth will not be discovered. To accurately appreciate the complexity of the problem the author will undertake an extensive look at uniform policies, their development and benefits. A thorough analysis of other agencies will be embarked upon to discover any tendencies and possible solutions.

This research directly supports the National Fire Academy's Executive Leadership Course by gathering and analyzing data and taking a comprehensive look at the current adaptive challenge facing the CFD (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2011, I-6). The study will investigate the need for the potential development and implementation of a dress and appearance standard. The topic directly relates to two of the five United States Fire Administration (USFA) strategic goals, "Improve the fire and emergency services' professional status and Lead the Nation's fire and emergency services by establishing and sustaining USFA as a dynamic organization" (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2011, p. II-2,3).

Literature Review

A detailed examination of literature in related textbooks, periodicals, the internet and official documents was performed to answer the questions posed for the research. Additionally, the theme for the study progressed as a result of scrutinizing other organizational uniform policies, with particular attention to standardization, comfort, protection and implementation. A comprehensive review of the materials was required to create a starting point to steer the research process and institute a vision for the future. A patterned approach was utilized to conduct and explain the literature review. Each of the research questions established was analyzed in the order it was presented.

The title of the research suggested the CFD must initially define the term uniformity to gain perspective in how to advance with regard to a resolution. Uniformity is referred to as “The state or quality of being uniform; overall sameness or regularity” (Webster’s College Dictionary, 2001, p. 1336).

The first question that the literature review sought to answer was: *What perceptions does the public possess concerning the wear of uniforms by public servants?*

Fussell (2002) indicated throughout his writings that the uniform commanded respect, and was to be taken seriously. He further inferred that the uniform suggests certain characteristic traits communicated to the public based upon the wearer’s occupation. For public servants such as police officers and fire fighters it conveyed virtue, expertise, trustworthiness and courage. The attire links the individual with a successful profession that extorts a degree of value. Society has certain expectations of those in command roles within a community. The likeness of the uniformed personnel only goes unnoticed when the public is in dire straits and requires assistance.

Goffman (1959) concluded that in reality, those in uniform are seeking the approval of others.

When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the tasks he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be (p. 1).

He believes that this prospect is reasonable and to some level defies logic because the costume does not necessarily define the performer.

Mansel (2005) discussed how the uniform transformed the wearer. It bestowed upon the recipient a certain degree of status among the commoners, as well as commanding loyalty, respect and produced a strong impact of influential power. He also believed that in many instances that several radical leaders in the past and present regarded the uniform as necessary to transform their subjects by projecting the illusion of strength and dominance to create civil obedience.

Barbaro (2006) concluded in his article that even in the retail industry the customers are more responsive to uniformed employees. Even the casual business uniform can be representative of a company and indicative of the staff member's expertise with the organization. Patrons will seek out those that wear identical garments for direction, answers and general information.

Calfee (2005) made reference to how a uniform can transmit a positive, competent, confident and professional appearance. When conducting emergency operations in the line of duty, citizens are less likely to view fire fighters in a bad light based upon the image projected. Many police agencies put a great deal of forethought in choosing the style and design of their attire due to the psychological effect it has on the public, and fire departments should be no exception to that rule. He also noted, "... many believe that people behave in a manner that reflects their appearance" (p. 69).

Professional appearance is everything according to Chief Cochran (2006). The public only has a short period of time to form a credible opinion of safety workers because of their limited interaction. Wearing the uniform with pride and presenting a consistent look sends a strong message about the organizations commitment to the community.

Powers (2005) pointed out the mental aspect of a professional's appearance. Healthcare workers in the field can gain patient and family members trust and confidence by presentation alone. Today the expectation of our customers has evolved and even been altered. This is due to the portrayal of public servants through various means including the multitude of television programs available.

The second question inquired: *How can the executive staff at the CFD cultivate the organizations image through the standardization of uniforms while maintaining the level of comfort and safety vital to the employees?*

According to the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) (1998), safety should be the central theme for selecting station wear. They point out that certain types of clothing and materials can contribute to injuries on the job. Other types of materials are specifically designed for fire fighting and are recommended by IFSTA as work uniforms.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in their 2009 edition of NFPA 1975, *Standard on Station/Work Uniforms for Emergency Services* (2011) addressed the safety aspect of uniform selection. The NFPA is regarded as the institution that sets the standard for the fire service in its recommendations and codes. The organization was insistent upon the use of flame resistant materials that complied with vigorous testing and performance standards. The addition of cotton and other lighter fabrics in this edition allowed for added comfort and enhanced value to the department. The standard does not focus on the question of design, style or recommend a specific manufacturer.

Wilmoth made a comparison of two uniform materials and why fire departments preferred them. The first was Nomex, due to the fire resistive nature, abrasion resistance, low shrinkage, and color fastness. This particular material was regarded as superior to other

substitutes and met all of the testing and performance requirements set forth by the NFPA. The main reason for choosing this material was the safety it afforded the wearer and the durability. The next fabric considered as acceptable station wear was cotton. This was based upon the affordability it was cooler and had the knack to breath. This was the overwhelming choice among most departments because of cost and comfort. The main complaint for cotton regarded the durability and fading of the cloth.

Recommendations were made by Varner (2008) regarding what choices are available for fire departments today. His conclusions were a result of what many departments have been experimenting with and selecting. As described previously, Nomex and cotton are predominantly preferred by most departments. Firewear is another option, which is a modacrylic/cotton blend. It meets the fire resistance standards set forth by NFPA 1975 and is essentially a combination of the other two materials. Another item that has gained popularity is performance fitness garments. These articles of clothing are thermally unstable and unsuitable to be worn while on duty. It was suggested that any plans to change uniforms should comprise department members involved in a wear trial to assess strength, shrinkage, comfort and color fade.

The final question asked: *How do other similar organizations approach the appearance of employees and perceive the purpose and impact of the uniform?*

The Jackson Township Division of Fire in Grove City, Ohio has an established guideline for fire fighters to adhere to. The Uniform and Fire Clothing Guideline (2011) emphasizes the importance of preserving the professional standards the organization wishes to convey to the citizens. All members of the department are required to wear uniforms in a consistent manner in order to sustain a standardized image. The policy establishes the time period certain articles of

clothing can be worn based upon climatic conditions (short versus long sleeve shirts), how to dispose of unserviceable items and what combinations are approved. The department establishes and maintains a list of three vendors that carry the specific brand and style available for purchase and replacement.

Reference Manual 43 (2000) put out by the National Park Service (NPS) is recognized as the employee uniform standard. The manual is 53 pages in length and gives detailed guidance on the wear and display of the uniform. The NPS takes great pride in being role models and wish to convey their courtesy, service, integrity, self-reliance and self-sufficiency. These attributes are indicative of the NPS desire to serve the public and protect the Nation's irreplaceable natural and cultural heritage. The directive addresses criteria regarding the rules for wear, the different types of apparel available and when each should be worn. It further appoints a uniform manager or committee for the purpose of coordinating all matters pertaining to issues including implementation of new and changed items. The document establishes an allowance system for replacement and dictates what manufacturers are capable of reproducing the apparel and insignia devices for distribution.

Each branch of the United States military has separate but distinct uniform regulations. One such instruction is Army Regulation 670-1 (2005) which prescribes policies, responsibilities and the administrative procedures for the wear of commonly assigned and optional uniforms by enlisted soldiers and officers. The policy adopted a quality control system to insure the regulation is strictly adhered to and sets forth the measures for any necessary changes made. The Army believes that a neat, orderly and soldierly presentation is crucial to military discipline. The strength and effectiveness of the organization is related to the pride and self discipline displayed through a conservative image.

Based upon the literature review, it would appear that organizations rely heavily upon image and the aspiration to be successful at their relevant activities. In the private sector that achievement transforms into prosperity. Integrity, conformity and admiration are the preferred result for public service organizations. In spite of the viewpoint presented in the literature review the impression seems to be the similar. Dressing for success has an acute affect on our culture.

Procedures

The research was designed to investigate how the CFD presented itself to the community through the display of their uniforms. Numerous sources were reviewed and evaluated to obtain answers and a potential solution, if it exists, to the problem. To facilitate the research, a literature review was conducted; three separate questionnaires were disseminated to CFD employees, citizens served by the CFD and other public service organizations with similar demographics. These surveys were designed to, first of all, investigate how public perception transforms into the need for a uniform policy, if the desire for standardization can also incorporate a suitable level of comfort and lastly, evaluate how other agencies implement such guidelines and what motivations necessitate a change in policy. Finally, an interview was conducted with the CFD Fire Chief, Timothy Tener to gain insight into his views regarding the issue.

An extensive appraisal was conducted using a broad spectrum of literature from various locations. The initial research was initiated at the Learning Resource Center located on the campus of the National Fire Academy. Much of the information provided there consisted of fire service magazine articles and existing Applied Research Papers (ARP) that addressed diverse aspects of this issue. The Pickaway County Public Library located in Circleville, Ohio was used

to recover countless subject specific publications focused primarily on uniforms past and present and professional image. The inter-library loan practice was regularly employed to aid in the evolution of the research. Several other organizations were contacted and graciously provided copies of their uniform policies for examination and review. The CFD library was used extensively to locate many professional periodicals and fire service oriented publications to gain greater insight into the topic. Lastly, the internet was utilized with the aid of the search engine provided by Google. The internet sources examined focused on subject matter specialists and their recommendations relevant to the study. The literature review exposed much of the rationale for the development and implementation of a uniform guideline. Many of those conditions were exploited to fashion the surveys utilized in the research.

A detailed survey (Appendix A) was drafted and distributed to all fire fighter-emergency medical technicians (FF/EMT) at the CFD. The survey consisted of 10 questions and was designed to gain an understanding of how members viewed the current state of the department's image as related to appearance. The questionnaire also sought to gain insight about what aspects of selecting and wearing a uniform were most important to personnel.

The next questionnaire (Appendix B) was used to ascertain how the community viewed the organizations image and appearance through the presentation of its employees. The nine questions were created as a result of the information obtained from the literature review. 150 surveys were forwarded to citizens who recently had contact with department members in the disbursement of their duties at emergency scenes or had participated in a community risk reduction program. Of the 150 respondents who received the survey 72 replied.

The last survey (Appendix C) was prepared and disseminated to obtain an understanding of how other similar organizations approach the appearance of employees and perceive the

purpose and impact of the uniform. They were sent out and analyzed to establish their usefulness to the research. The survey first established if the department had an existing guideline or policy in place and what steps were taken to implement such a plan. Ten respondents were used from various areas throughout the state of Ohio based upon their organizational similarities and utilization of uniform guidelines.

Two of the three questionnaires were administered through a web-based service called SurveyMonkey.com. The software allowed the author to fabricate, distribute, and monitor the surveys on line. Both questionnaires were developed and distributed with the goal of obtaining a large enough set to ensure accuracy and recognize potential trends. After the draft copy of each survey was completed, they were sent to three randomly picked individuals currently employed with the CFD. Instructions were specified to evaluate the clarity of the questions, search for grammatical errors, and verify the validity of the questions. The questionnaire prepared for the community was mailed to residents residing in the serviceable area that had been identified as customers with recent contact to CFD personnel.

The 10 question survey (Appendix A) dispersed to the members of the CFD had detailed instructions and indicated it was designed as a feedback instrument to gain information on their experiences and views pertaining to image and appearance. The participants were instructed to freely express their ideas and provide feedback and were assured all information provided would be confidential. Of the 17 members that were requested to participate 14 responded.

The nine question instrument (Appendix B) disseminated to the citizens of Circleville, was focused primarily on their perceptions of the departments image in order to obtain a diverse database. A total of 72 responses were returned and 60 were selected based upon their direct association with fire department personnel and the completeness of the questionnaire. Those

individuals who participated in the research were assured that all information obtained was confidential and that their contribution in the survey was completely voluntary.

The last assessment (Appendix C) was composed of nine questions and was distributed to other organizations throughout the State of Ohio. The gathering of data was obtained based upon department size and the demographic similarities to the CFD and the City of Circleville. Several methods were employed to obtain this information, including an examination of the web site, serb.state.oh.us (Ohio State Employee Relations Board), personal contacts by phone, communication with officers of other departments familiar to the author, and email addresses circulated by the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association. The questionnaire was then emailed via the identified website (SurveyMonkey.com) to the departments.

The interview with CFD Fire Chief, Timothy Tener was conducted on December 1, 2011. The discussion was conducted after the results of all other surveys were completed and tabulated in order to lead the progression of the meeting. All of the questions (Appendix D) posed during the interview were designed based upon the responses generated from the three surveys and information gathered from the literature review.

Limitations

Much of the material created for the subject matter was difficult to locate and restricted for the specific nature of the research selected. The availability of material regarding previous uniform guidelines was difficult at best to obtain due to the records retention program put into place by the city office of human resources and the author relied upon the authenticity of photographs displayed at the CFD and the local genealogical library. In fact, in an attempt to pull together data limited to the subject several retired fire fighters from the CFD were contacted and they were unable to offer any detailed information only limited rudimentary essentials were

recalled. Because the internet was utilized to submit two of the surveys to gather information, it was assumed that they would be completed and returned promptly. On several occasions the identifiable participants had to be contacted personally, by phone, additional emails or in person and asked to complete the questionnaire. In a few instances individuals were unable to access the survey and had to be instructed and assisted to retrieve the information.

Results

A diverse group of research methods were drawn upon to address the three research questions. They consisted of a comprehensive review of literature, three separate but related surveys and an interview with a major stakeholder in the study. Each survey was broken down individually to assess the influence the uniform had on the group.

The 10 question survey distributed to the current fire department members (Appendix A) revealed assorted theories and concepts. Question one solicited information regarding how they believed the community viewed the importance of the uniform. Greater than 60 percent felt the public believed in the notion that there is a certain value in the appearance of uniformed personnel. Table one exhibits this particular question in greater detail.

Table 1

CFD Member Survey: Significance of Uniform

How significant do you believe it is to the community that public servants present themselves in a neat and uniform fashion?	14 Respondents
Not Significant	2
Fairly Significant	3
Significant	8
Critical	1

Questions two and three explored the topic of selecting the uniform. It sought to gain an understanding of each employee's opinion of what factors are most and least vital in the choice of uniform combinations. Table two demonstrates the respondents reply to each question.

Table 2

CFD Member Survey: Selecting a Uniform

Questions 2 & 3 Uniform Factors (14 responses)	What factor do you consider to be <i>most</i> vital when selecting a uniform?	What factor do you consider to be <i>least</i> vital when selecting a uniform?
Appearance	4	1
Comfort	4	3
Safety	6	0
Durability	0	10

Question four inquired how personnel felt about the implementation of a policy or guideline governing the wear and style of uniforms approved for the CFD. Table three demonstrates each respondents reply to the question.

Table 3

CFD Member Survey: Policy Implementation

How significant do you believe it is for a public service organization to have a policy or guideline regarding the dress and appearance of employees?	14 Respondents
Not Significant	1
Fairly Significant	8
Significant	5
Critical	0

Question five solicited information regarding the method for selecting the outfit that each individual would be assigned to wear. Of the four selections presented to the respondents the overwhelming reply endorsed the inclusion of the employees in the process. Of the fourteen whom participated, twelve selected the response that incorporated the administration and employees only and the other two individuals preferred community representatives as a part of the process. Question six queried information regarding the fire fighters preference for the assessment of uniforms prior to selection. Question seven and eight explored the influence the

uniform had on the public from the CFD member's perspective. Table four exhibits these three particular questions in greater detail.

Table 4

CFD Member Survey: Uniform Trials and Influence

Questions 6,7 &8 (14 responses)	What is the significance of conducting a trial for different styles, brands and manufacturers of uniforms before a selection is made?	How significant is the influence of the uniform on the public's faith in a fire fighter's capability to function efficiently?	What is the significance of the fire fighters uniform regarding its ability to induce a feeling of safety and security among community members?
Not Significant	5	1	1
Fairly Significant	7	3	6
Significant	2	9	7
Critical	0	1	0

Question nine asked the employees to speculate on how the uniform has an affect on the citizens in regards to their contributions through taxes to the organization. The final statement, question 10, inquires about each member's personal interaction with the public they serve and how that has shaped their own analysis of dress and appearance. Table five is a detailed guide of the results obtained.

Table 5

CFD Member Survey: Uniforms, Taxes and Personal Interactions

Questions 9 (14 responses)	How significant of a role do you believe the uniform plays to the citizens in regards to their contributions through taxes to the organization?	Question 10 (14 responses)	If a citizen has ever commented on you or another member's appearance and/or uniform, how did the remark influence the view of yourself or the CFD?
Not Significant	11	Positively	2
Fairly Significant	2	Negatively	1
Significant	1	Neither	1
Critical	0	Never Occurred	10

The findings of the survey completed by the citizens of Circleville (Appendix B) revealed a varied reaction. Like the CFD members survey, the first question requested a reaction to the presentation of those providing emergency services to the public. Table six breaks down the answers provided by the respondents.

Table 6

Community Member Survey: Significance of Uniform

How significant do you believe it is to the community that public servants present themselves in a neat and uniform fashion?	60 Respondents
Not Significant	4
Fairly Significant	21
Significant	32
Critical	3

The second question made inquiries in relation to the ability of CFD members to cultivate an image of honor, integrity, dedication, and bravery through their display of the uniform. Of the 60 that replied 44 responded in the affirmative and the remaining 16 replied no to the question.

The third question revealed that most of the community, 45 of the 60, believed the appearance of Circleville fire fighters was symbolic of their pride in the organization and this made a positive impression. The fourth question inquired about public opinion regarding the implementation of a policy or guideline governing the wear and style of uniforms. Table seven gives a rundown of the reaction to the question.

Table 7

Community Member Survey: Policy Implementation

How significant do you believe it is for a public service organization to have a policy or guideline regarding the dress and appearance of employees?	60 Respondents
Not Significant	0
Fairly Significant	9
Significant	38
Critical	13

The fifth question was specific in regards to each community members experience and how the appearance of the fire fighters was perceived. Question six asked the viewpoint of those contributing, if all fire department staff should wear identical styles of uniform when engaging the public. Table eight exhibits these particular questions in greater detail.

Table 8

Community Member Survey: Experience and Viewpoint

Question 5 (60 responses)	Regarding your recent exposure to fire department members, how did you perceive the individual(s) image and appearance?	Question 6 (60 responses)	How significant is it to you that each member of the CFD wears an identical style/brand of uniform?
Neat and Uniform	9	Not Significant	5
Casual	40	Fairly Significant	18
Sloppy	11	Significant	35
		Critical	2

Question seven and eight delved into the impact the uniform had on the public from the standpoint of capability, safety and security. Question nine asked citizens to consider how the uniform has influenced their view concerning the contributions made through taxes to the organization. Table nine provides a comprehensive aspect of the outcome.

Table 9

Community Member Survey: Influence, Safety, Security and Taxes

Questions 7,8 & 9 (60 responses)	How significant is the influence of the uniform on the public's faith in a fire fighter's capability to function efficiently?	What is the significance of the fire fighters uniform regarding its ability to induce a feeling of safety and security among community members?	How significant of a role do you believe the uniform plays to the citizens in regards to their contributions through taxes to the organization?
Not Significant	6	19	16
Fairly Significant	22	28	4
Significant	27	13	38
Critical	5	0	2

The findings of the survey completed by the other fire departments in the state of Ohio (Appendix C) exposed certain noteworthy information. The first question required each respondent to identify the importance of uniforms to the community. Table 10 demonstrates this particular question in greater detail.

Table 10

Ohio Fire Department Survey: Significance of Uniform

How significant do you believe it is to the community that public servants present themselves in a neat and uniform fashion?	10 Respondents
Not Significant	0
Fairly Significant	0
Significant	3
Critical	7

Questions two and three were identical in the employee's survey and investigated the topic of selecting the uniform. Both inquiries sought an understanding of other organizations experience with making uniform choices and what factors were the most and least important to them. Table 11 demonstrates the respondents reply to each question.

Table 11

Ohio Fire Department Survey: Selecting a Uniform

Questions 2 & 3 Uniform Factors (10 responses)	What factor do you consider to be <i>most</i> vital when selecting a uniform?	What factor do you consider to be <i>least</i> vital when selecting a uniform?
Appearance	2	3
Comfort	1	7
Safety	6	0
Durability	1	0

Question four inquired from other Ohio organizations about the implementation of a policy or guideline governing the appearance and style of uniforms. Table 12 gives a breakdown of the feedback to the question.

Table 12

Ohio Fire Department Survey: Policy Implementation

How significant do you believe it is for a public service organization to have a policy or guideline regarding the dress and appearance of employees?	10 Respondents
Not Significant	0
Fairly Significant	0
Significant	1
Critical	9

Question five asked each fire department if they utilized a policy for the dress and appearance of employees. Every organization that replied distinctly stated they indeed did establish such a guideline. The sixth question was seeking to establish what method best described the manner in which they implemented or brought about change to the policy. Table 13 gives an overview of the reactions to question six.

Table 13

Ohio Fire Department Survey: Policy Development

Which description most resembles your fire departments method of developing and implementing a uniform policy or change of the present guideline? (select one or all that apply)	10 Respondents
A committee of various stakeholders was created to select and appoint the current uniform.	4
A trial period for testing a variety of uniforms (brands, manufacturers and/or styles) was instituted before a decision could be made.	1
The administration/officers or any combination of management instituted the policy based upon research.	4
None of the above.	1

Table 14 presents the last three questions, seven, eight and nine, in an understandable fashion.

Each inquiry is identical to those asked in the other two surveys and desired to ascertain how other departments viewed the uniforms influence on the community in three separate but related topics.

Table 14

Ohio Fire Department Survey: Influence, Safety, Security and Taxes

Questions 7,8 & 9 (10 responses)	How significant is the influence of the uniform on the public's faith in a fire fighter's capability to function efficiently?	What is the significance of the fire fighters uniform regarding its ability to induce a feeling of safety and security among community members?	How significant of a role do you believe the uniform plays to the citizens in regards to their contributions through taxes to the organization?
Not Significant	0	0	0
Fairly Significant	2	1	0
Significant	7	8	4
Critical	1	1	6

The interview with CFD Fire Chief Timothy Tener (Appendix D) was intentionally performed after the three questionnaires were returned, reviewed and tabulated (personal communication, December 1, 2011). This was premeditated in order to generate feedback and promote dialogue from the Chief when the information was provided. Chief Tener was well aware that most organizations have addressed the issue with the implementation of policy but stated that the personnel of the CFD recognize this as an unwritten rule. However, he does see the need for such a document in the future. To put a guideline in place would require a timetable in order to phase out existing items that still remained in a serviceable condition. The Chief felt that the public had a favorable opinion of current members of the organization but did assert more could be done to dress up the department image. He made further suggestions regarding the reduction of selected items currently available to fire fighters therefore creating an improved appearance of uniformity. If the CFD was to devise a policy the Chief acknowledged he would maintain final say on all aspects of the rule but would take all suggestions under advisement. He did not see the need for a committee or conducting a trial phase. When questioned about the most vital feature to ponder prior to selection he was emphatic that safety was the main concern.

Cost was also suggested as a key element that would be taken into account before opting with a particular brand of clothing.

Discussion

The purpose of the research was to discover if the apparent inconsistencies of the uniform at the CFD detracted from the expectations of the public and the firefighters. The CFD must continue to gather information and devise a plan to assist the organization in becoming more proactive in presenting themselves as a vital entity within the community. The information assembled during the literature review was restated on numerous occasions in the data collected from the three surveys and the interview conducted. After completing the study, the following discoveries are worth noting. Every public service organization contacted while conducting the research already had a written uniform policy currently in place. All of those documents ranged from extraordinarily broad in spectrum to particularly specific. To foster appreciation of the information collected each of the research questions will be communicated in greater detail.

The first question posed how the public might feel about the wear of uniforms by those individuals who are assigned as community providers. The literature review had a varied mixture of commentary about the topic. Almost all of the authors agreed that the uniform plays a vital role in promoting the wearers identity and commands a certain degree of respect. Those that observe have certain expectations of uniformed personnel including a superior intelligence in the area of expertise, a command of authority and a higher level of credibility. The study showed that the uniform and the way it is worn, no matter the setting, had a profound affect on our culture today. The survey to the community members indicated that the public does take notice and a larger percentage felt that uniforms play a significant role in identifying the wearer and promoting a first-class image. Most, also believed the uniform diversely influences them in

multiple ways. A particular interesting response from the citizens addressed their recent experience with CFD members. More individuals specified that fire department personnel were either casual or sloppy as opposed to neat and uniform. The interview with the CFD Chief indicated a different point of view of public perception. Each was diversely opposed to the other in their reaction.

The next question focused primarily on how the managers within the CFD can present the organization in a positive manner through their appearance while maintaining the safety and comfort essential to the staff. The examination of the literature pointed out consistently that any choice of attire must first address the safety factors associated with the material itself. Each of the sources examined presented information regarding the fabrics of choice utilized by most organizations today. It was also suggested prior to implementation of policy or guidelines an organized committee should be appointed and a trial period conducted of different styles, brands and manufacturers of uniforms. The questionnaire to the CFD employees yielded some expected and other surprising results. Like the public the fire fighters believed their presentation of the uniform was meaningful. They also agreed with the literature sources that safety was the most important factor to consider when selecting uniforms. When presented with recommendations on the process of selecting an authorized uniform combination the popular responses included the employees in the equation. The Fire Chief was open to allowing suggestions from individuals but maintained the final say on implementation and selection.

The last question inquired how other similar establishments manage the appearance of their employees and distinguish the function and effect of the uniform. Three separate organizational policies were evaluated in the literature review. They all addressed the importance of their particular uniform and the image they wished for the employees to convey to

the public. All were precise in the manner in which the uniform must be worn and the combinations that are acceptable in varied situations applicable to their profession. Two of the three standards made the reader aware of the procedures for making modifications to the uniform or what steps are involved when changes have been made. The survey sent out to other similar fire departments in Ohio revealed that each had written guidelines on the dress and appearance of uniformed employees. Their answers illustrated the critical significance of a neat and consistent image and the importance of providing personnel with guidance in this area. They also consider that an employee's appearance has a direct bearing on the public's belief in the organization.

The three groups that participated in their respective survey had a mixture of similar questions. However, their responses were wide-ranging and in a small number of instances did any one group agree. A comparison of the similar questions contained in each of the surveys was analyzed utilizing a chart method (Appendix E). Each was scrutinized in order to identify how each collection impacted the outcome.

The first question in the surveys solicited the importance of public servants to present a neat and uniform appearance. The majority of the employees at the CFD as well as community members believed that a neat and uniform image is significant and the other departments considered this a critical topic.

CFD members and the other Ohio fire departments that participated responded to questions two and three. The questions tackled the matter of what each respondent from the two groups felt was the most and least important factors when selecting a uniform. Safety was the single most important factor to both groups. Appearance and comfort were also preferred by a select few of the CFD members and regarded as important. The least desirable feature for selection differed greatly between the two groups. Durability ranked last to the members of the

CFD while comfort was positioned as the least important dynamic to contemplate to the other organizations.

Question four solicited the respondent's opinion in each survey about the necessity for fire departments to have a formal policy. The other Ohio fire departments and the general public placed greater weight upon this matter than did the members of the CFD. This was evidenced by the other organizations surveyed already operating with a policy or standard.

Questions seven, eight and nine also were consistent among all of the surveys. Question seven desired to identify the total influence the uniform possesses on the public's reliance in a fire fighter's capability to function efficiently. The largest percentage from each of the groups associated the uniform as being significant with reference to that issue. Question eight discovered that the community was less inclined to attach any significance to the sentiment of safety and security created by the uniform. Finally, question nine revealed that both the citizens of Circleville and the other fire departments in Ohio each placed higher emphasis on the uniforms role in regards to the community's contributions through taxes.

How we present ourselves and the department to the public has a lasting impression. An excellent reputation for any organization is vital and requires consistent perseverance. In order to build a credible image, our customers have come to expect neat and clean fire fighters to show up at their door under any circumstance. Cochran (2006) stated so profoundly "We must take our image very seriously, as it plays a major role in our ability to gain support for our mission and serve our community" (p. 122).

Recommendations

Recommendations relate directly to the stated problem and purpose. The recommendations resulting from this research should focus on those issues that are within the control of the CFD and its administration. In order to evolve and progress towards presenting professional appearance fire fighters, officers and the administration must accept their role in the quest. Each of the aforementioned groups should appreciate that the direction of the department, while profoundly influenced by their contribution, cannot be palatable at all times. The intended outcome of divisive resolutions may not always be manifested right away. The upper echelon of the department and fire fighters must engage in dialogue to reach appropriate concessions on uniform choices representing adequate comfort and appearance.

Based upon the information gathered a dress and appearance standard should be developed and implemented to address the confusion among staff members. The policy should address the uniform combinations that are acceptable while diffusing the myriad of variations that currently exist. Absolute guidelines must be presented to combat this point of interest that has plagued the organization for years.

The manner in which the process takes place should involve all affected parties. As suggested by the literature review, a committee of those individuals with an investment in the subject should be convened, with each garnering equal authority in its inception. Final approval and implementation would be placed upon the current administration. The specific features that must be addressed include; style, department emblem, fabric, other peripheral insignia, combinations, and what selections are acceptable during inclement conditions. More importantly from a broader perspective, the key factors that must be focused upon comprise; appearance, comfort, cost, durability and finally safety.

The CFD should maintain the uniform committee in order to examine and revise the policy on a regular basis. A full appraisal after implementation would assist in correcting any deficiencies. The committee could convene at regular intervals to discuss new and improved materials and fabrics, safety features, and better quality garments as they become available. As with the modern culture we serve, styles change at an ever increasing rate. Public service organizations must remain vigilant in maintaining tradition while not forsaking what is currently acceptable in society today.

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Appendix “A”

You are invited to participate in a survey that will be distributed to all fire fighter and EMTs at the Circleville Fire Department (CFD). The ten question survey is designed to generate responses in order to gain a broad understanding of how you view the current image as related to appearance of personnel at the CFD. It also explores any other factors or concerns that you may feel need addressed pertaining to this issue. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and will remain confidential. All data generated from this survey will be reported only in the aggregate. At no time will any individuals name be seen or singled out by the researcher. It is vital to learn your opinion and outlook. If any questions should arise or problems occur please contact Kirk Edgington at (740) 474-3333 or by email at the address listed on the link below. Thank you for your contribution, time and support to this study. You may now begin the survey by clicking on the continue button.

1. How significant do you believe it is to the community that public servants present themselves in a neat and uniform fashion?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical

2. What factor do you consider to be *most* vital when selecting a uniform?
 - a. Appearance
 - b. Comfort
 - c. Safety
 - d. Durability
3. What factor do you consider to be *least* vital when selecting a uniform?
 - a. Appearance
 - b. Comfort
 - c. Safety
 - d. Durability
4. How significant do you believe it is for a public service organization to have a policy or guideline regarding the dress and appearance of employees?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
5. What method of selecting a uniform style for the CFD would be most acceptable to all involved?
 - a. An appointed committee consisting of employees and administration
 - b. An appointed committee consisting of employees, administration and community members
 - c. Administration with the input of CFD officers
 - d. Administration

6. What is the significance of conducting a trial for different styles, brands and manufacturers of uniforms before a selection is made?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
7. How significant is the influence of the uniform on the public's faith in a fire fighter's capability to function efficiently?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
8. What is the significance of the fire fighters uniform regarding its ability to induce a feeling of safety and security among community members?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical

9. How significant of a role do you believe the uniform plays to the citizens in regards to their contributions through taxes to the organization?
- a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
10. If a citizen has ever commented on you or another member's appearance and/or uniform, how did the remark influence the view of yourself or the CFD?
- a. Positively
 - b. Negatively
 - c. Neither
 - d. Never occurred

Appendix “B”

You are invited to participate in a survey that has been distributed to other community members, such as yourself, who have recently received emergency services or have been in direct contact with members from the Circleville Fire Department (CFD) while in the performance of their assigned duties. The nine question survey is designed to generate responses based upon your experiences with CFD employees regarding their dress and appearance. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and at no time will any personal information be requested. All data generated from this survey will be reported only in the aggregate. It is vital to learn your opinion and outlook concerning this issue. After completion, please return the questionnaire in the self addressed stamped envelope. If any questions should arise please contact Kirk Edgington at (740) 474-3333 or by email at kirk.edgington@circlevillefire.net. Thank you for your contribution, time and support to this study.

1. How significant do you believe it is to the community that public servants present themselves in a neat and uniform fashion?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
2. Do the members of the CFD, **through their appearance**, cultivate an image of honor, integrity, dedication, and bravery espoused by the fire service?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. Did the appearance of the fire fighters symbolize their pride in the CFD and leave you with a positive outlook towards the organization?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. How significant do you believe it is for a public service organization to have a policy or guideline regarding the dress and appearance of employees?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
5. Regarding your recent exposure to fire department members, how did you perceive the individual(s) image and appearance?
 - a. Neat and uniform (all members had on the same attire)
 - b. Casual (members displayed some similarities)
 - c. Sloppy
6. How significant is it to you that each member of the CFD wears an identical style/brand of uniform?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical

7. How significant is the influence of the uniform on the public's faith in a fire fighter's capability to function efficiently?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
8. What is the significance of the fire fighters uniform regarding its ability to induce a feeling of safety and security among community members?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
9. How significant do you think the uniform is to the community in their assessment of quality acquired for their contributions through taxes to the organization?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical

Appendix “C”

You are invited to participate in a survey that will be distributed to other fire departments in the State of Ohio. The nine question survey is designed to generate responses in order to gain a broad understanding of the existing image as related to appearance of personnel at your organization. It also explores your insight of the purpose and impact of the uniform on your organization and community. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary and will remain confidential. All data generated from this survey will be reported only in the aggregate. At no time will any individuals name or organizational affiliation be seen or singled out by the researcher. It is vital to learn your opinion and outlook. If any questions should arise or problems occur please contact Kirk Edgington at (740) 474-3333 or by email at the address listed on the link below. Thank you for your contribution, time and support to this study. You may now begin the survey by clicking on the continue button.

1. How significant do you believe it is to the community that public servants present themselves in a neat and uniform fashion?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical

2. What factor do you consider to be *most* vital when selecting a uniform?
 - a. Appearance
 - b. Comfort
 - c. Safety
 - d. Durability
3. What factor do you consider to be *least* vital when selecting a uniform?
 - a. Appearance
 - b. Comfort
 - c. Safety
 - d. Durability
4. How significant do you believe it is for a public service organization to have a policy or guideline regarding the dress and appearance of employees?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
5. Does your department have a current uniform / dress and appearance policy or guideline?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

6. Which description most resembles your fire departments method of developing and implementing a uniform policy or change of the present guideline? (select one or all that apply)
 - a. A committee of various stakeholders was created to select and appoint the current uniform.
 - b. A trial period for testing a variety of uniforms (brands, manufacturers and/or styles) was instituted before a decision could be made.
 - c. The administration / officers or any combination of management instituted the policy based upon research.
 - d. None of the above.
7. How significant is the influence of the uniform on the public's faith in a fire fighter's capability to function efficiently?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical
8. What is the significance of the fire fighters uniform regarding its ability to induce a feeling of safety and security among community members?
 - a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical

9. How significant of a role do you believe the uniform plays to the citizens in regards to their contributions through taxes to the organization?
- a. Not Significant
 - b. Fairly Significant
 - c. Significant
 - d. Critical

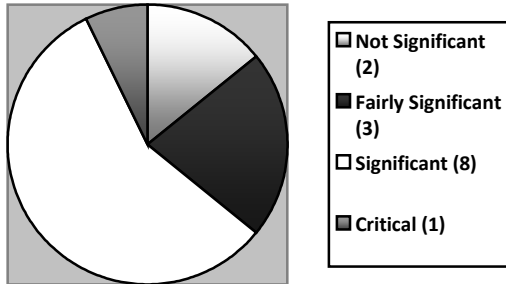
Appendix “D”

1. Through the course of the research it became apparent that the majority of public service organizations utilize uniform policies. Why do you think that the CFD has never taken this action?
2. If the CFD was to employ such a policy, how would you recommend implementation based upon the information provided?
3. What do you believe is the public’s view of the organization, based upon the current image and appearance of the members?
4. Who or what group would make final recommendations for selection of uniform style, brand / manufacturer if a policy was to be implemented?
5. What factors should be considered when selecting a uniform combination?

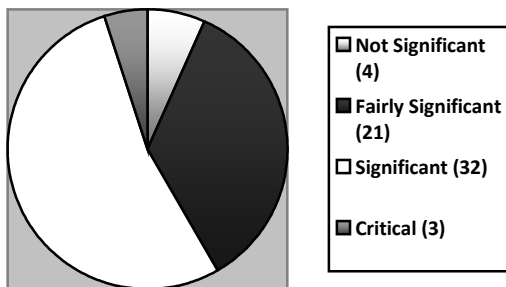
Appendix “E”

Question 1 appeared in all three surveys.

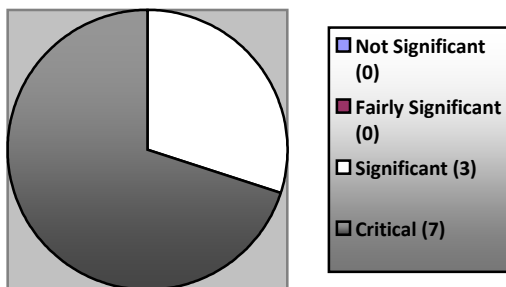
1. How significant do you believe it is to the community that public servants present themselves in a neat and uniform fashion?



CFD Members Survey (14 Responses)



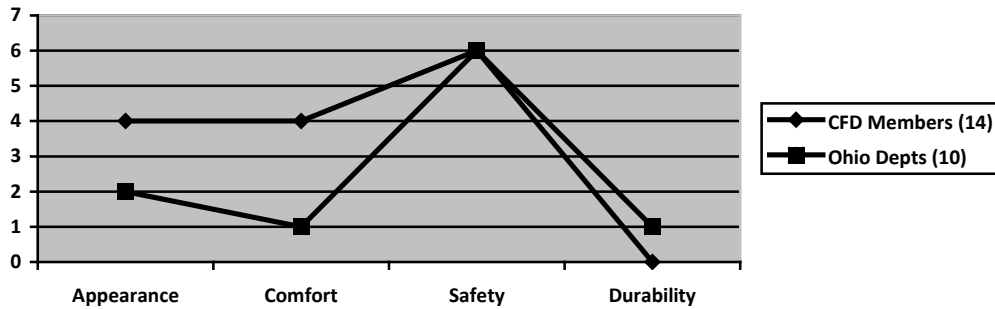
Community Members Survey (60 Responses)



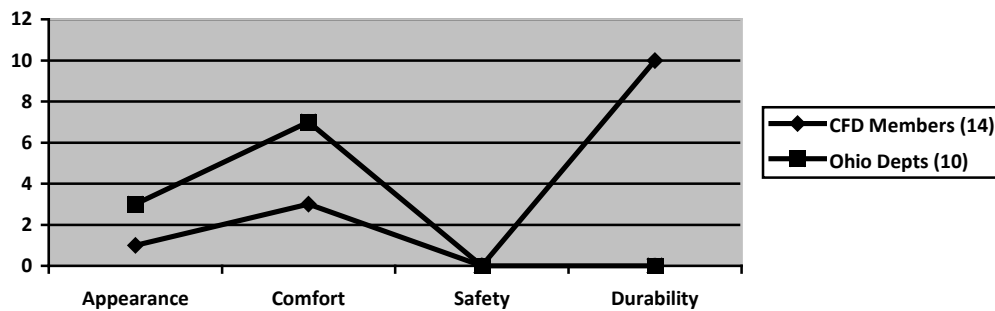
Ohio Fire Department Survey (10 Responses)

Questions 2 and 3 appeared in the CFD member and Ohio fire department surveys exclusively.

2. What factor do you consider to be *most* vital when selecting a uniform?

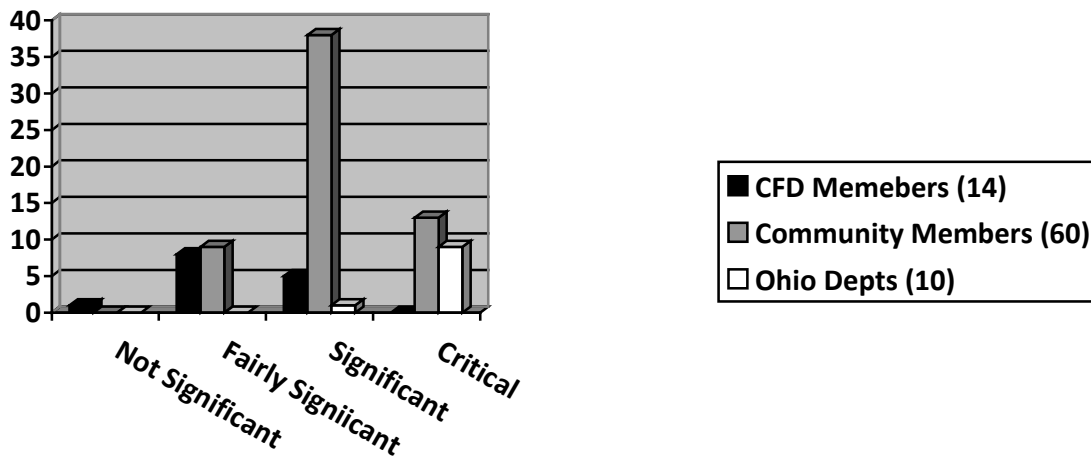


3. What factor do you consider to be *least* vital when selecting a uniform?



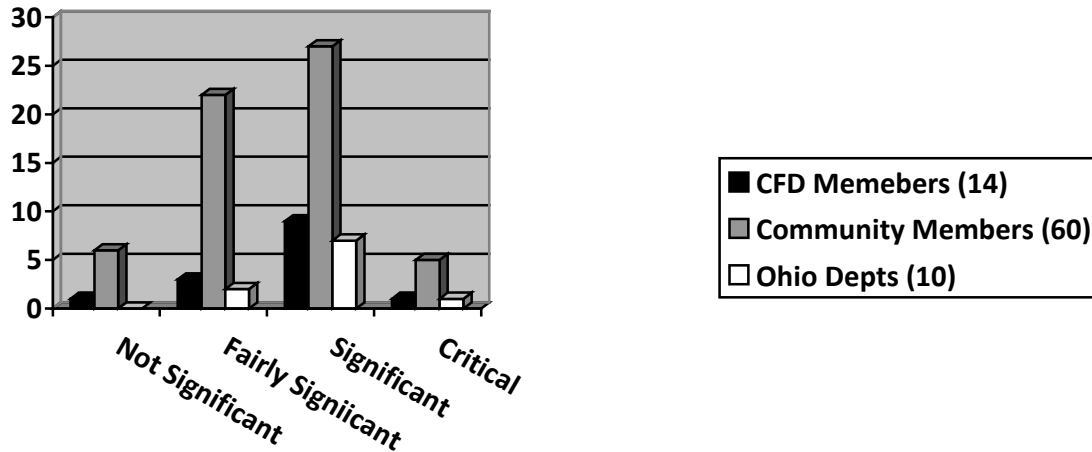
Question 4 appeared in all three surveys.

4. How significant do you believe it is for a public service organization to have a policy or guideline regarding the dress and appearance of employees?

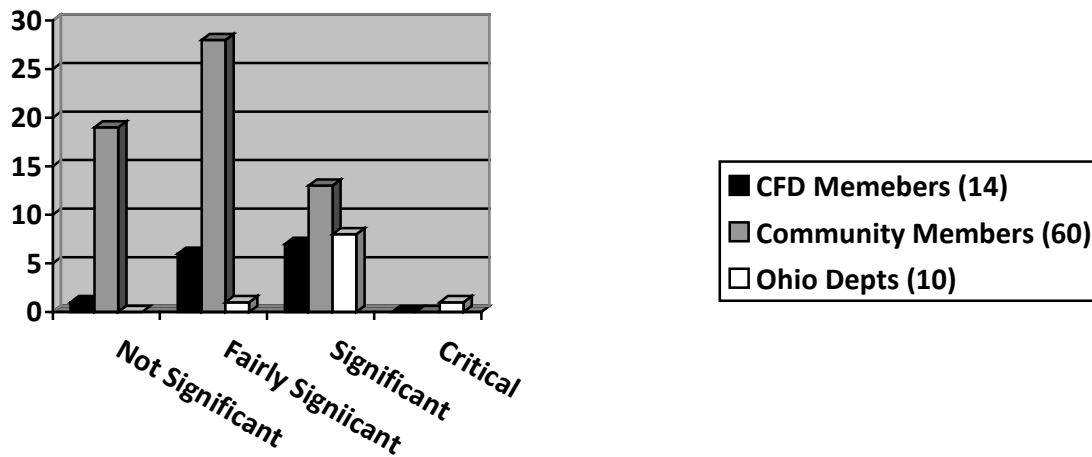


Questions 7, 8 and 9 also were consistent among all of the surveys.

7. How significant is the influence of the uniform on the public's faith in a fire fighter's capability to function efficiently?



8. What is the significance of the fire fighters uniform regarding its ability to induce a feeling of safety and security among community members?



9. How significant of a role do you believe the uniform plays to the citizens in regards to their contributions through taxes to the organization?

