

UNIFORMS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR VA NATIONAL CEMETERY EMPLOYEES

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This is an out of cycle update to National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Directive 3012 to clarify policy regarding uniforms and personal protective equipment (PPE) for designated Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemetery employees.

2. SUMMARY OF CHANGES:

a. Changes directive title to reflect scope of this directive as applicable to VA national cemetery employees.

b. Revises the definition of the term “Employee” and related policy concerning individuals for whom NCA cannot use appropriated funds to provide uniforms and PPE.

c. Revises the policy section to clarify who is required and authorized to wear a cemetery uniform and the dry cleaning and laundering of uniform items and PPE.

d. Provides guidance on maternity-wear uniform items and updates the cemetery directors’ assigned responsibilities accordingly.

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

4. RELATED PUBLICATIONS:

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

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

5. RESCISSION/SUPERSESSON: This publication supersedes NCA Directive 3012, National Cemetery Administration Uniforms and Personal Protective Equipment (March 12, 2020).

6. RECERTIFICATION: This directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last day of November 2028.

/s/
Matthew T. Quinn
Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs

Distribution: Electronic Only

UNIFORMS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR VA NATIONAL CEMETERY EMPLOYEES

1. PURPOSE/AUTHORITY/SCOPE:

a. This Directive establishes National Cemetery Administration (NCA) policy for furnishing and servicing Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemetery employee uniforms, designates the cemetery employees required to wear a uniform, and specifies the required uniform items.

b. The statutory and regulatory authorities governing this directive are sections 5901 through 5903 and 7903 of Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.); and sections 591.103 and 591.104 of title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

c. The use of cemetery or central office operating funds to purchase NCA-branded clothing items for employee use when performing NCA-authorized outreach functions is outside the scope of this directive and is addressed in NCA Directive 8500, NCA Public Affairs (October 26, 2021).

2. POLICY:

a. NCA will provide uniforms to cemetery employees who perform certain duties associated with cemetery operations. Utility work uniforms will be provided to cemetery employees that have responsibilities associated with interment, grounds, and maintenance activities. Office uniforms will be provided to cemetery employees that have responsibilities associated with greeting and escorting Veteran families and members of the public for official cemetery business.

b. NCA will maintain a national level contract for cemetery uniform services. Cemeteries will use the national contract to the greatest extent possible. Where such contract is unable to satisfy all local requirements, cemetery directors may use other purchasing vehicles to address those unmet needs.

c. NCA will use appropriated funds to provide uniforms for employees who perform the duties of a cemetery administrative specialist or cemetery representative and for any cemetery employee under the Federal Wage System (FWS), subject to the government wide maximum uniform cost allowed by law and published in 5 CFR 591.103(b). See Appendix A, Uniform Requirements for VA National Cemetery Employees, for specific information about required uniform items for different employee positions.

d. To ensure safe and healthful work environments, NCA will provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to cemetery employees in accordance with Federal laws, Executive Orders, and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policies governing procurement and occupational safety and health including NCA Directive 7700, National Cemetery Administration Occupational Safety and Health Program (January 14, 2019).

e. NCA will use appropriated funds to provide PPE for employees who perform the duties of a cemetery administrative specialist or cemetery representative and for any

cemetery employee under the FWS. District Executive Directors may establish an annual spending cap for PPE per employee. Cemetery employees are prohibited from spending personal funds for such items in accordance with VA financial policies. See Appendix B, Minimum Personal Protective Equipment for VA National Cemetery Employees, for the minimum quantity of PPE items to be issued for different employee positions.

f. Other NCA employees who visit a VA national cemetery in an official capacity should wear clothing appropriate for the role and purpose of the visit and are not authorized to wear local cemetery uniform items in the performance of their official duties. This policy is intended to ensure the wear of a cemetery uniform item does not create confusion in the presence of public visitors. Cemetery officials will provide PPE to visiting NCA employees as warranted to ensure safety and protection associated with the purpose of the visit.

g. By law, NCA may not use appropriated funds to provide uniforms or PPE for individuals who work for NCA at cemeteries through various programs but are not NCA employees. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

(1) Participants of the Veterans Health Administration Compensated Work Therapy and Transitional Work Experience programs;

(2) Participants of the Department of Defense SkillBridge Program; and

(3) Volunteers, regardless of whether they are registered with VA's Center for Development and Civic Engagement.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **The Executive Director, Cemetery Operations**, is responsible for:

(1) Setting policy for the mandatory requirements for furnishing and servicing uniforms and PPE to designated cemetery employees; and

(2) Facilitating decision-making and requirements coordination for any national level uniform services contract with input from districts and cemeteries.

b. **District Executive Directors** are responsible for:

(1) Approving or disapproving requests submitted by Cemetery Directors to modify the uniform worn by their employees or the number of uniform items furnished to them above the minimum.

(2) Approving or disapproving requests from cemetery directors for expending cemetery operating funds beyond any spending cap established under paragraph 2.e. (See related guidance in paragraph 4a(7)).

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

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

(1) Providing NCA uniforms to employees as specified in Appendix A (reference also paragraph 4a(4)).

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

(3) Where a contract for uniform or PPE care and maintenance is not already in place, approving individual payment for or establishing a contract to obtain:

(A) Routine dry cleaning for all uniform items that are dry-clean only;

(B) Routine laundering for all uniform items issued to FWS employees; and

(C) Dry cleaning and laundering for PPE as circumstances dictate (reference para 4.a(3)).

(4) Exercising fiscal responsibility by approving bulk purchases of prescribed uniform articles and/or PPE that constitute best value based on product and service quality, performance, and cost. These items are counted against the amount allowed for an individual employee's uniform, or if applicable any cap on PPE spending per employee.

(5) Using professional judgement to waive uniform requirements in cases where an employee has a unique uniform need that would exceed the spending cap (for example due to injury, pregnancy or a significant change in size. (See related guidance in para 4a(5)).

(6) Requesting approval to expend cemetery operating funds beyond any spending cap established by the District Executive Director under paragraph 2.e. (See additional guidance in paragraph 4a(7)).

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

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

(9) Selecting the color of the uniform and boots for their FWS employees. Cemetery Directors may approve a different color uniform item, such as the work shirt or cap, for employees performing the duties of a foreman or equivalent supervisor so they can be identified easily in the field.

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

(11) As needed, preparing and submitting to their district office a request to modify the uniform requirements for their employees or the number of uniform items to be provided.

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

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

(14) Leveraging nationwide or regional contracts for uniform services, to the maximum extent possible.

d. Cemetery Employees are responsible for:

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

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

(A) Undergarments.

(B) Socks, hose or tights.

(C) Belts.

(D) Sweaters, vests or shawls.

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

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

f. The Director, NCA Contracting Service, is responsible for coordinating with the Executive Director, Cemetery Operations or their designee, on decision making and requirements validation associated with a national level uniform services contract.

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

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

(1) Uniforms will be made of durable material(s) suitable to the work being performed and the local climate.

(2) Employees will maintain and wear uniforms until they are no longer serviceable. There is no requirement for NCA to replace an employee's uniform annually.

(3) Cemeteries will use operating funds for routine dry cleaning and laundering of applicable uniform items and/or PPE that require it as described in paragraph 3c(3) and, where applicable, in accordance with a uniform contract.

(4) Cemeteries will use operating funds to procure uniforms, the total cost of which cannot exceed the maximum annual allowance per employee set by the Office of Personnel Management, implemented in 5 CFR § 561.103. The current cap on uniform costs per employee is \$800 annually.

(5) In cases where an employee has a unique need for additional uniform items (for example due to an injury, pregnancy or significant change in size), the Cemetery Director may provide additional uniform items so long as the regulatory spending cap is not exceeded. Employees will return special need uniform items to the cemetery when no longer needed.

(6) In the event the maximum amount allowed to procure uniform items for a specific employee already has been spent, the Cemetery Director may waive the uniform requirements for the employee, allowing them to wear personal items that meet their need, using styles and colors that maintain a professional and coordinated appearance and do not violate any local rules or restrictions governing the uniform the employee would typically wear.

(7) Cemeteries will use operating funds to purchase PPE. Federal law does not impose a maximum annual allowance or any other spending cap on PPE; however, NCA policy allows district executive directors to establish a per person spending cap. Cemetery directors will submit requests with justification to the district office for approval to exceed any established spending cap.

(8) Federal law prohibits all employees from using personal funds to cover the cost of PPE items, either in whole or in part. Where a district office has established a spending cap on mandatory-issue PPE and the cost of required PPE for an employee exceeds the cap, the employee must submit a request with justification for the additional expense through their supervisory chain to the authority that set the spending cap for approval.

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

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

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

(B) The employee is separating from their duty station and they are not transferring to another VA national cemetery where their uniform items and individual PPE would be usable at the gaining facility. In this case, the issuing cemetery should have uniform items and PPE cleaned for reissue, provided they are still serviceable and would be appropriate for reuse.

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

b. For the purposes of wear:

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

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

(3) The United States (U.S.) flag and VA or NCA-issued insignia are permitted for wear on an employee's uniform, including patches and pins. (Examples of VA and NCA-issued patches include the VA Department Seal patch and the Cemetery Caretaker Training patch. Examples of VA and NCA-issued pins include the VA I-CARE pin, the VA Years of Service pins, NCA's American Customer Satisfaction Index (or "ACSI") high score pin and NCA's 50th Anniversary pin.) Requests to wear any other type of insignia on an employee's uniform, including insignia of associated with the U.S. military or military service, would be modifications to the uniform and require approval from the District Executive Director (see paragraphs 3b(1) and 3c(11)).

5. DEFINITIONS:

a. Cemetery Employee. An individual who is officially employed by NCA and assigned to a VA national cemetery as their official duty station, as documented on Standard Form 50, Notification of Personnel Action, and assigned to the Executive Schedule (ES) pay system, General Schedule (GS) classification and pay system, or FWS. A person is a cemetery employee regardless of whether the individual's schedule is full-time or part-time, or whether their position is permanent, term or temporary. FWS employees may be identified with one of the following job classification prefixes:

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

(2) WL/Wage Grade Work Leader.

(3) WS/Wage Grade Supervisor.

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

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

d. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Items provided to protect an employee against injury or damage to their uniform.

6. REFERENCES:

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

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

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

d. 5 CFR § 591.103 Governmentwide maximum uniform allowance rate.

e. 5 CFR § 591.104, Higher initial maximum uniform allowance rate.

f. United States Office of Personnel Management Fact Sheet: [OPM Pay Administration Fact Sheet for Uniform Allowances](#).

g. [VA Form 10-1148, Employee Uniform and Property Issue Documentation](#).

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

i. NCA Directive 8500, NCA Public Affairs (October 26, 2021).

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

Uniform Requirements for VA National Cemetery Employees

Pay System(s)	Performing the Duties of	Item(s) Issued	Total Quantity Issued to Full-Time Employees	Total Quantity Issued to Part-Time and Collateral Duty Employees
ES & GS	Any Role/Responsibility	Name Badge	2	1
GS	Cemetery Administration Specialist or Cemetery Representative*	Blazer, Navy Blue	2	1
		Dress Pants or Skirt, Gray	5 pair	2 pair
		Collared Dress Shirt, White or Light Blue, Long-sleeve or Short-sleeve; or Business Attire Blouse White or Light Blue, Long-sleeve or Short-sleeve, with or without a collar	5	2
		Necktie, Bowtie or Crossover Tie, Navy Blue or Maroon, either solid color or with a simple pattern (e.g., checkered)	2	1
FWS	Any Role/Responsibility**	Patch with Cemetery Name	7	3
		Patch with Employee First Name	7	3
		Work Pants, Full-length Leg	7	3
		Work Shirt: Collared or Crewneck; Long-sleeve or Short-sleeve	7	3

Notes

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

** At the cemetery director's discretion, an employee performing the duties of foreman or an equivalent supervisor can wear a different color uniform item (such as a work shirt or cap) for easier identification in the field (reference paragraph 3c(9)).

Minimum Personal Protective Equipment for VA National Cemetery Employees

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

Notes:

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

** The mandatory-issue requirement for this PPE item is limited to facilities located in regions that experience and are impacted by severe winter/cold weather. These facilities can acquire this PPE at any time of year.

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

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

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

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

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