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United States Department of Agriculture  
Marketing and Regulatory Programs  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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**Mission Area Directive**

**MRP 4591.1**

**10/12/2020**

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**UNIFORM POLICY**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. PURPOSE.....	1
2. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS AND REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS .....	1
3. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES.....	2
4. BACKGROUND.....	2
5. DEFINITIONS .....	2
6. SCOPE.....	4
7. POLICY.....	4
8. AMOUNT OF ENTITLEMENT.....	5
9. EXCEPTIONS.....	6
10. UNIFORM GUIDELINES .....	6
11. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	7
12. FORMS.....	11
13. RECORDS MANAGEMENT .....	11
14. INQUIRIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.....	13

**1. PURPOSE**

This Directive establishes Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) policy on uniforms, uniform allowances, and wearing guidelines for employees under the Federal Employees Uniform Allowance Act.

**2. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS AND REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS**

- a. This Directive supersedes MRP 4591.1 Uniform Allowance and Wearing Guidelines, dated 9/19/2007.
- b. This Directive is in force until cancelled or superseded.

### 3. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

This Directive must be applied in conjunction with:

- a. [5 U.S.C. 5901-5902](#), The Federal Employees Uniform Allowance Act;
- b. [5 U.S.C. 7903](#), Protective Clothing and Equipment;
- c. [5 CFR 591, Subpart A](#), Uniform Allowances; and
- d. [USDA Acquisition Desk Book](#).

### 4. BACKGROUND

The determination of using federal funds to purchase wearing apparel is based on the principle that every government employee is required to present themselves for official duty in proper attire according to the requirements of their position. Wearing apparel is the personal responsibility of the employee, but there are certain items, required by the nature of the job, which the government should furnish. If, under these limited circumstances, a clothing item is required, then an exception is allowed for items designated as uniforms or protective clothing, provided these items meet certain specific and strict requirements. The three basic types of wearing apparel are: ordinary wearing apparel/normal business work attire; protective clothing and equipment; and uniforms.

### 5. DEFINITIONS

- a. Contracting Officer. An individual with the authority to enter into, administer, and/or terminate contracts and make related determinations and findings.
- b. Contracting Officer's Representative (COR). An individual authorized in writing by the contracting officer to perform specific technical or administrative contract functions.
- c. Mission Area. A group of agencies with related functions that report to the same Under or Assistant Secretary. For the purpose of this Directive, the mission area is MRP.
- d. MRP Uniform Advisory Board. Board comprised of one member from each MRP program with a uniform program that acts as a liaison between MRP/Agency leadership groups and uniform wearing programs with offerings. It will operate under an approved charter defining roles and responsibilities.

- e. Ordinary Wearing Apparel/Normal Business Work Attire. Normal business or work attire purchased at the discretion of the employee which may include clothing, attire, inner and outer garments. Agencies cannot use government funds to purchase ordinary wearing apparel.
  
- f. Program Uniform Committee. A group of employees designated by the Program’s Deputy Administrator to oversee its uniform program.
  
- g. Protective Clothing and Equipment. Clothing or equipment required for employee safety and is considered either Special Clothing and Equipment (SC&E) or Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This may include items to protect eyes, face, head, and extremities, protective clothing, respiratory devices, and protective shields and barrier between the individuals and a hazard that could result in an injury or occupational illness. Items of PPE must only be authorized after a “job hazard analysis” has been completed specifically identifying the items as required mitigation to address a workplace hazard. To be authorized as SC&E, three conditions must be met:
  - (1) The item must be “special” and not part of the ordinary and usual furnishings an employee may reasonably be expected to provide for themselves;
  - (2) The item must be for the benefit of the Government; that is, essential to the safe and successful accomplishment of the work, and not solely for the protection of the employee; and
  - (3) The employee must be engaged in hazardous duty.
  
- h. Uniform. A specified article or articles of clothing an employee is required by the Program to wear to provide a distinctive and easily identifiable appearance in performing his/her job. A “uniform” does not include protective equipment required for the employee’s safety under 5 U.S.C. 7903, or normal business or work attire purchased at the discretion of the employee. To be considered a uniform, three conditions must be met:
  - (1) The clothing item(s) must be specified;
  - (2) Employees must be required to wear the specified clothing item(s) (not optional); and
  - (3) The sole purpose of the clothing item(s) is to provide employees a distinctive and easily identifiable appearance while performing official work duties.

- i. Uniform Coordinator. Dedicated employee who oversees uniform program. Duties may include but are not limited to placing orders, overseeing order deliveries, ensures the correct uniform items are delivered/received.
- j. Wearing Guidelines. Program guidance on when and how to wear uniforms.

## 6. SCOPE

- a. This Directive applies to:
  - (1) Uniforms only;
  - (2) Uniform wearing programs; and
  - (3) Personnel utilizing uniforms.
- b. This Directive does not apply to PPE or safety items.

## 7. POLICY

- a. When uniforms are required for the performance of official duties, MRP will provide allowances for employees to buy or replace uniforms. Any actions that deviate from the allowances must be approved by the Program's Uniform Committee or Uniform Coordinator.
- b. Programs will use the established Departmentwide contract with the approved vendor for all uniform purchases.
- c. Programs **will not**:
  - (1) Establish separate contracts for uniforms purchases.
  - (2) Provide reimbursement (i.e., SF-1164 process) of uniform expenses.
  - (3) Purchase ordinary wearing apparel/normal business work attire.
  - (4) Use appropriated/government funds to purchase ordinary wearing apparel.
- d. MRP programs will determine which employees must wear uniforms and what items of clothing will be required. MRP employees who may be required to wear uniforms to perform official duties include those:

- (1) Involved in inspections, grading work, audit programs, wildlife management, domestic programs, and, on a case-by-case basis, those involved in emergency programs.
  - (2) Who are in contact with the public and require identification via a uniform while performing official work duties, as determined by programs.
  - (3) Who are not required to wear a uniform at their permanent duty station, but are required to wear a uniform for an emergency program or project.
- e. Each program will establish written policies as needed on:
- (1) The level of management/supervision (or their designee) with the authority to approve the annual uniform allowance;
  - (2) The amount of the annual allowance;
  - (3) Uniform ordering instructions;
  - (4) Sanctions;
  - (5) Eligible employees;
  - (6) Wearing guidelines; and
  - (7) Required timeframes for uniform ordering and purchasing.
- Note:** Any program policies covering this subject must be written in accordance and aligned with this Directive.
- f. The annual uniform allowance period is by fiscal year.
- g. Programs with recognized bargaining units are reminded that they must meet their obligations to consult and/or negotiate, as appropriate and required, before changes made by this Directive and any program guidance can become effective for bargaining unit employees.
- h. Employees will only place orders during times specified in program policy and in contract specifications.
- i. The MRP Uniform Advisory Board will provide additional information, guidance, and instruction on its portal site.

## **8. AMOUNT OF ENTITLEMENT**

- a. The uniform allowance will not exceed the current authorized amount of **\$800** per year per employee. Although agencies have authority to pay an annual uniform allowance rate *up to* a maximum rate of \$800 a year, it is not anticipated or required that every employee who must wear a uniform will receive the maximum rate. The amount may change with annual Congressional approval (see 5 CFR 591 Subpart A for changes, if any).
- b. Employees will not carry over any unused uniform allowance balance from one fiscal year to the next.
- c. An employee newly required to wear a uniform is entitled to the full uniform allowance as designated by the program even if he/she becomes eligible with less than a full fiscal year remaining.
- d. For each period of 90 continuous calendar days in leave and/or nonpay status, the employee's annual replacement allowance will be discounted for the next full fiscal quarter at the program's discretion.
- e. Employees may be requested to return all uniform apparel when uniform entitlement ceases.

## 9. EXCEPTIONS

- a. For emergency purposes, direct purchases (e.g., Agency purchase card or purchase order) from the approved vendor may be granted upon Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) approval.
- b. Individual vouchers are an option when:
  - (1) Backorders surpass 60 days;
  - (2) Employees' sizes aren't offered by the approved vendor;
  - (3) Qualifying life-changing events (e.g., maternity); and/or
  - (4) Other reasons approved by the MRP Uniform Advisory Board.
- c. All exceptions must be approved by the respective Program Uniform Committee or Uniform Coordinator.

## 10. UNIFORM GUIDELINES

MRP programs that require employees to wear uniforms must create, distribute, and enforce policy on uniform guidelines to ensure supervisors and employees are aware of their responsibility to properly obtain, wear, replace, and dispose of uniforms to maintain the professional image of MRP. Program uniform policy (including wearing guidelines) must include, but is not limited to:

- a. The type of uniform(s) to be worn;
- b. When and how a uniform must be worn;
- b. How uniforms must be purchased, including the allocation of allowances;
- c. Required items that **will not** be reimbursed by the Mission Area (i.e., socks, gloves, hosiery, etc.);
- d. How and when uniforms must be disposed, returned, etc.; and
- e. Sanctions for improper use of uniforms and uniform allowances.

## 11. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The effective implementation of the policy and procedures as established by this Directive requires the responsibilities of the following individuals and/or groups:

- a. MRP/Agency Leadership Group will:
  - (1) Appoint members to the MRP Uniform Advisory Board; and
  - (2) Review, approve, and implement MRP Uniform Advisory Board recommendations.
- b. MRP Uniform Advisory Board will:
  - (1) Provide recommendations MRP/Agency Leadership Groups and Programs;
  - (2) Maintain Mission Area policy and best standard practices for uniform wearing programs;
  - (3) Review and approve program uniform policies/guidelines;
  - (4) Review issues concerning uniform and wearing apparel. Forward issues as appropriate to proper program leadership;
  - (5) Consult appropriation laws;

- (6) Ensure that each program with a uniform allowance program has a designated certified COR;
  - (7) Operate under established charter;
  - (8) Review and approve MRP standardized uniform offerings, as appropriate; and
  - (9) Develop and maintain reports and data, as needed.
- c. Deputy Administrators (DA) will:
- (1) Establish standing program uniform committees or Uniform Coordinator;
  - (2) Determine funding source for uniform allowances; and
  - (3) Determine which positions require uniforms and define the uniform offerings for that position.
- d. Program Uniform Committees/Coordinator will:
- (1) Establish charters and/or operating procedures;
  - (2) Work with MRP Uniform Advisory Board, DA, field, and users to establish uniform wearing programs and policies;
  - (3) As appropriate bring items to the MRP Uniform Advisory Board for action and consideration;
  - (4) Establish and maintain program policy which includes wearing guidelines;
  - (5) Recommend which positions require uniforms and what articles of clothing will be required and defined as part of that uniform;
  - (6) Review and approve program-specific uniform offerings;
  - (7) Determine uniform review process to ensure appropriate use;
  - (8) Establish and manage a process for uniform allowance account creation, oversight, and closeout;
  - (9) Ensure uniforms are purchased through approved sources and methods;
  - (10) Have a COR as a member;

- (11) Develop a means for employees to submit feedback and receive timely, appropriate responses;
  - (12) Provide information from the programs to the COR regarding the performance of the vendor; and
  - (13) Develop and maintain reports and data, as needed.
- e. The Contracting Officer Representative (COR) will:
- (1) Maintain Federal Acquisitions Certification (FAC)-COR Level 1 or higher;
  - (2) Be appointed in writing by the Contracting Officer (CO);
  - (3) Coordinate the submission of funded requisitions;
  - (4) Verify receipt and acceptance of the ordered items;
  - (5) Review invoices no greater than 2 weeks after submissions and either accept or reject the invoices;
  - (6) Coordinate Program Uniform Committee requests and act as liaison with the CO or as identified in the letter of delegation; and
  - (7) Solicit information from the programs regarding the performance of the vendor.
- f. The MRP Business Services (MRPBS) Asset and Acquisition Management Division (AAMD) CO will:
- (1) Administer contracts;
  - (2) Obligate Funds; and
  - (3) Consult on uniform procedures and policies.
- g. Supervisors (including managers) or Uniform Coordinator of uniform wearing employees will:
- (1) Notify employees of uniform wearing requirements;
  - (2) Complete [MRP Form 390](#), *Uniform Request Authorization*, to create employee uniform accounts and/or make changes as stated on the form.

- (3) Communicate and enforce Department, MRP, Agency, and Program policies and wearing guidelines to include the appropriate use of uniforms to support mission needs;
- (4) Notify Program Uniform Committee/Coordinator of life-changing events or other circumstances potentially requiring changes to uniform allowances for guidance;
- (5) Ensure proper retention and disposal of uniforms per program uniform policy;
- (6) Submit account deactivation request using the [MRP Form 390](#), *Uniform Request Authorization* upon employee separation or change of duties no longer requiring a uniform; and
- (7) For APHIS programs, properly complete the APHIS Form 40, *Employee Exit Inventory* during employee off-boarding process to include and account for uniforms.

h. Uniform wearing employees will:

- (1) Adhere to Department, MRP, Agency, and Program uniform policy, guidance, and instruction for wearing, maintaining, and placing orders, through approved sources, for uniforms to meet mission needs;
- (2) Pay for uniforms to be altered, laundered (except where biosecurity issues require onsite laundering), dry cleaned, and repaired, as needed with personal funds;
- (3) Keep and wear uniforms that are clean and maintained in good condition;
- (4) Only place orders during times specified in program uniform policy and in contract specifications; and
- (5) Only wear uniforms while on official duty and as specified in program uniform policy;
- (6) Dispose of uniforms according to program uniform policy;
- (7) Notify supervisor when uniforms are no longer needed (i.e., retirement, new job, separation, and transfer); and
- (8) Notify supervisor of life-changing events or other circumstances potentially requiring changes to uniform allowances.

## 12. FORMS

The forms that are referenced and required for use as established by this Directive include:

- a. APHIS Form 40, [Employee Exit Inventory](#); and
- b. MRP Form 390, [Uniform Request Authorization](#).

Note: The MRP Form 390 should be requested through the programmatic uniform committee or uniform point-of-contract for the program.

## 13. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Federal records created by this Directive must be maintained in accordance with the established [General Records Schedule \(GRS\)](#) and/or the [APHIS/AMS](#) Records Management Handbook when applicable. If employees are named in an active litigation hold, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, and/or other action, those records, regardless of media, must be preserved and maintained in their native format until otherwise notified by MRPBS MRP-Information Technology (MRP-IT) Information Management Branch (IMB) and/or the Office of General Counsel.

- a. MRP Uniform Advisory Board is the official recordkeeper of:
  - (1) The charter and member appointments which will be destroyed 3 years after superseded or obsolete, per GRS 5.1, item 010.
  - (2) MRP Uniform Advisory Board and MRP/Agency Leadership requests and decisions which will be destroyed 3 years after the decision is made or action taken, per GRS 5.1, item 010, unless otherwise noted.
  - (3) Meeting notes which will be destroyed 3 years after the meeting date, per GRS 5.1, item 010
- b. Program Uniform Committees are the official recordkeepers of:
  - (1) The Program Uniform Committee Charter which will be destroyed 3 years after superseded or obsolete, per GRS 5.1, item 010.
  - (2) The Program Uniform Committee decisions based on submitted requests and feedback which will be destroyed 3 years after the decision is made, per GRS 5.1, item 010, unless otherwise noted.

- (3) Meeting notes which will be destroyed 3 years after the meeting date, per GRS 5.1, item 010.
  - (4) Program policy and guidance which will be destroyed when superseded, obsolete, or no longer needed for business whichever is later, per GRS 5.7, item 030.
  - (5) Records about authorizing and managing uniform items which will be destroyed 2 years after the report or item is discontinued, per GRS 5.7 Item 040, unless otherwise noted.
  - (6) Uniform sample approvals which will be destroyed when 3 years old in accordance with GRS 1.1, item 040.
  - (7) Vendor reports which will be destroyed when 3 years old, per GRS 1.1, item 040.
- c. CORs are the official recordkeepers of vouchers and the complete record of vendor correspondence and vendor performance records which will be destroyed 6 years after final payment or cancellation in accordance with GRS 1.1, items 010 and 013.
  - d. MRPBS AAMD CO is the official recordkeeper of contract file will be destroyed 6 years after final payment or cancellation in accordance with GRS 1.1, items 010 and 013.
  - e. Supervisors/ Uniform Coordinators of uniform wearing employees are the official recordkeepers of:
    - (1) APHIS Form 40, *Employee Exit Inventory*, which will be destroyed 1 year after the checklist is completed, per GRS 2.5, item 020.
    - (2) Account creation and deactivation requests per vendor instruction which will be destroyed when 3 years old, per GRS 1.1, item 040.
  - f. Uniform wearing employees are the official recordkeepers of individual transactions with vendor which must be maintained as needed, not exceed 2 years, per GRS 5.1, item 010, unless otherwise noted.
  - g. MRP Information Technology, Information Management Branch (MRP-IT, IMB) is the official recordkeeper of this Directive which is to be preserved permanently, per [Paperwork and Data Management \(PDM\) 4-1](#).

**14. INQUIRIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- a. For general inquiries and questions concerning this Directive, contact the MRP Uniform Advisory Board at [Uniform.Advisory.Board@usda.gov](mailto:Uniform.Advisory.Board@usda.gov).
- b. For records management inquiries contact your Program Records Management Liaison for [AMS](#) or [APHIS](#).
- c. This Directive can be accessed online via the [APHIS](#) and [AMS](#) Issuance Web site.

/s/

Doug Nash  
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