

Crew-Neck T-Shirts

Monday, 19 October 2009

In response to some unscrupulous managers who are trying to provoke bargaining unit employees by making misleading statements about the grievance that was filed regarding the base-layer clothing, the following clarification is provided by the Union:

Initially, the Union emphasizes that it supports optional base-layer clothing, and has supported the concept of optional crew neck undershirts for years. The Union did not ask management to cease and desist from offering base-layer clothing, but had to file the grievance to force the Agency to fulfill its statutory obligation to bargain with the Union so that the legitimate concerns outlined herein can be addressed. Chief Aguilar's failure to follow the law and the contract in this instance is not just a technical violation; it goes to the heart of a labor-management relationship based on mutual trust and respect. The Agency consistently ignores its legal obligations in an attempt to marginalize the Union and cause dissent and division. The Union does not believe that it is unreasonable to expect the head of a law enforcement agency to follow the law. We all know what happens to an agent who violates a Federal statute or policy. Why should managers be held to a lower standard? If Chief Aguilar would lead by example, Sector Chiefs would follow.

Color

Chief Aguilar claims that uniformity is the reason the base-layer clothing items are green, however, he cannot explain how this is achieved when one agent is wearing a green crew neck t-shirt and another agent is wearing a black turtle-neck. Similarly, he cannot explain how this goal is accomplished when the various green uniform items fade and agents are wearing several shades of green. Although color is not the primary issue for the Union, it is concerned that the exact shade required by the Agency may not be available outside of the uniform vendor. Additionally, one really has to wonder about the importance of uniformity in the color of underpants. While most supervisors are reasonable, we all know that there are some supervisors who have nothing better to do than make an issue out of the color of the base-layer clothing items. The Union wants to avoid these potential problems now and make sure that the issue is properly addressed for the future.

Material

Does anyone understand why management would require base-layer clothing items to be made of only one material? The Union recognizes that a moisture wicking material is important to those who work in hotter climates, but cotton and/or cotton blends should be options for those who work in moderate climates or who just prefer such materials.

Cost

As we all know, the authorized uniform vendor (currently VF Solutions) typically charges far more than a local or online retailer because it has a monopoly. This has been an ongoing concern for the Union. The cost of the base-layer clothing is a prime example of this problem. The least expensive base-layer clothing item, the short sleeve level 1 base-layer crew neck t-shirt, costs \$24.64, or \$147.84 for a set of six. A popular online retailer sells olive drab green crew-neck t-shirts for only \$4.00 apiece, or \$24.00 for a half-dozen.

The Union does not want to delay the implementation of the new base-layer clothing uniform items over these issues, and has offered to allow the initiative to move forward if the Agency authorizes employees to wear olive drab green crew-neck t-shirts of any material acquired from any source and offers a couple of lower-cost alternatives through the uniform vendor. The Union is still awaiting management's response.

