

## **UNIFORM, CLOTHING POLICY**

### **1.0 Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards and guidance in the wearing of uniforms for those employees and persons assigned duties with the Hidalgo County Fire Marshal's Office. The uniform allows a visual identification of the person's assignment and agency at a glance. Dependant on duties and current assignment the uniform also serves as a personal protective garment. The uniform also serves to reflect a professional appearance by the wearer.

### **2.0 Affects:**

The policy affects commissioned and non-commissioned personnel. Uniforms may be issued to commissioned and non-commissioned personnel based on job and duty assignment.

### **3.1 Proper Uniform Prescribed:**

3.2 Personnel wearing the uniform will only wear the uniform and insignia while on duty; on official business, or while on assignment, as prescribed and approved herein.

3.3 In addition to on-duty wear, uniformed members are authorized to wear the uniform while attending any special ceremonial event, memorial/religious event, meeting, training, or other assigned duties that may require the uniform to clearly identify the person as a representative from the Fire Marshals.

3.4 Department Head/ Supervisor may authorize other forms of dress/clothing during special assignments and or designated casual attire days.

### **4.1 Improper Uniform Wear Prohibited:**

Personnel issued a uniform will not wear the uniform or any portion thereof while off-duty, to any political gathering, or any other public or private gathering or to any business, or location that may be deemed as inappropriate unless their presence is of an official nature, and they are there to conduct an inspection, gather information, evidence, investigate any crime, or violation of local, state or federal law.

## **5.0 Appearance in Uniform:**

Personnel shall maintain a neat and professional military-type appearance while in uniform that shall be representative of the County and the Fire Marshal.

5.2 In general, the uniform shall be clean and neatly pressed. Footwear shall be clean and polished. Footwear that is not polish-able shall be maintained clean and free of debris. The badge and name-tag shall be replaced when they become unserviceable. Uniform shirts that are designed to be tucked into the trousers/pants, shall be tucked in.

5.2 In those circumstances where the uniform becomes extremely soiled or dirty because of the scene, personnel will make every effort to change into a clean uniform within a reasonable amount of time.

## **6.0 Approved Uniforms:**

Only those uniforms listed herein shall be worn while on-duty. Badge and insignia emblems may be embroidered upon those uniforms, but no personalized embroidery shall be allowed to be permanently affixed to any uniform. Embroidered name tags are allowed but they must be affixed to the uniform with "Velcro" type tape. A metal name plate may be displayed when in uniform. The name tape or plate shall be worn directly above the right breast pocket.

**6.1 Class A Uniform** – May also be called a dress uniform. This uniform shall consist of a white uniform shirt, black trousers, black polished footwear. The duty belt with appropriate gear attached that is commensurate with the person's assignment. The shirt shall have the Fire Marshal Patch on each sleeve, with the badge prominently displayed over the left breast pocket, and a gold colored name tag just over the right breast pocket. Any brass, silver or plated brass or silver fixtures shall be polished. Dependent on the time of year or event the shirt may either be short sleeve or long-sleeve with a black tie. A tie clip may be affixed to the tie. Rank insignia shall be prominently displayed on the collar. Awards, pins, and other entitlements that the person has earned through their career may be displayed in the form of ribbons or a ribbon board above the name tag with prior supervisory approval.

**6.2 Class B Uniform** - May also be called the utility uniform. This will be the daily wear uniform and will normally consist of a green shirt with khaki colored trousers/pants. Dependent upon the time of year and the weather, a long sleeve shirt may be worn in place of the short sleeve one.

**6.3 Class B-1 Uniform** – Another form of the utility uniform and will consist of a solid colored shirt with black trousers/pants.

**6.4 Class C Uniform** - This shall be any other uniform that is issued and may be classified as personal protective equipment, such as traditional structural fire-fighting gear (commonly referred to as "Bunker-Gear"; fire retardant shirts and pants or coveralls,

wild-land fire fighting clothing; Search and Rescue (SAR) uniform, and tactical uniforms. These types of uniforms shall be issued and worn for the assignment at hand. Uniforms of this nature shall meet or exceed the requirements set forth in the appropriate National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for the particular item of personal protective equipment/clothing. Those personnel assigned equipment maintenance duties shall refrain from wearing the uniform of the day, while maintaining, repairing or installing equipment.

**6.5 Headgear:** Headgear is considered personal protective equipment and personnel will wear the appropriate headgear commensurate with the circumstances and situation. This includes but is not limited to “baseball type cap, “boonie style” floppy hats, hard hats, fire helmets, and rescue helmets. Headgear will have the appropriate insignias identifying the person wearing it as a member of the Fire Marshal’s Office.

**6.6 Footwear:** Footwear is considered personal protective equipment and personnel will wear the appropriate footwear commensurate with the circumstance and situation. This includes but is not limited to, black polish-able boots or shoes, “steel toe” boots or shoes, hot weather boots/shoes, SAR boots, sneakers/tennis shoes, wet-shoes, oil resistant boots, rubber boots, etc. Other than boots or shoes worn on a daily basis, or wet-shoes, all other footwear shall meet or exceed those standards set forth by the National Fire Protection Association.

**6.7 Gloves:** Gloves will be issued and worn as personal protective equipment and will be commensurate with the circumstances and situation. Other than those gloves commercially available for everyday use, all others shall meet or exceed those standards set forth by the National Fire Protection Association.

**6.8 Eyewear/Facewear:** Dependant on assignment or the job at hand – eyewear may be issued to protect the eyes or face from ultraviolet light, projectiles, debris, and or heat. This section includes face and neck protectors with or without particle masks that are flame retardant or resistant. Protective eyewear must meet or exceed those standards set forth by ANSI or the National Fire Protection Association.

**6.9 Undergarments:** Undershirts shall display the Fire Marshal logo over the left front upper torso, and shall have distinct markings in large bold letters of a contrasting color of the undershirt with words, “POLICE” & “HIDALGO COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL” or “FIRE INVESTIGATOR” & “HIDALGO COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL” or “FIRE INSPECTOR & HIDALGO COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL emblazoned upon the back that will readily identify the person wearing it as a peace officer, investigator, or inspector. The undershirt will have a front pocket. It may or may not be fire retardant. Only those persons that are commissioned peace officers may wear clothing with the words POLICE on it. Undershirts may also be emblazoned with the Urban Search and Rescue logo on the back (USAR) and may be issued to those persons that are assigned those duties.

**6.10 Belts:** The trouser belt shall be made of nylon or ballistic webbing with a metal or aluminum buckle. These types of belts are normally referred to as “riggers-belt”. When wearing the presently issued no-buckle duty belt, the belt may be of such that matches the buckle-less system that is coated with “Velcro” hook & loop type material.

**6.10 Outerwear:** Shall consist of coats, jackets, traffic vests, rain-coat, and other foul weather gear. All issued outerwear coats and jackets, shall have the Fire Marshal patch attached to sleeves. High visibility vests, raincoats and other foul weather gear shall have the words “HIDALGO COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL” emblazoned upon the back in reflective lettering. Traffic Vests shall meet or exceed those standards set forth for emergency responders working alongside federal highways.

**6.11 Shorts:** Shorts may be issued and worn by those persons assigned swift water/deep water rescue. They shall be of the kind and style that is commensurate for the duties and assignments at hand.

### **7.0 Daily Wear:**

The uniform of the day shall be worn daily during working hours, or during after-hour callouts. Once on-scene, an individual determination may be made as to what personal protective uniform to change into, unless information is provided beforehand about the scene, that would allow the responder to change into the appropriate uniform or personal protective clothing for the situation, prior to departure. Arson investigators may remove the outer shirt and display the undershirt while on-scene to prevent damage and staining to the outer uniform shirt.

**7.1 Seasonal Wear:** Determination of the summer or winter uniform shall be based on the advent of daylight savings time. On the first business day after the initiation of daylight savings time, the uniform shall change appropriately.

**7.1 Law Enforcement Insignia:** Only those persons that are fully commissioned as peace officers may wear any article of clothing that has the words “POLICE”, “LAW ENFORCEMENT”, “COUNTY POLICE” or other similar language on them.

**7.2 Civilian:** Those persons that are employed by or assigned to the Fire Marshal's Office may be issued uniforms if those persons are deployable to any scene, any emergency operations center, or any other location where it will be necessary to readily identify those persons as members of the Fire Marshal's Office, this includes any person that normally works within the office environment or has duties assigned as a Fire Inspector only. These uniforms will not be personalized with the person's name on it.

### **8.0 Badge/Identification Card:**

A badge of office shall be issued to those persons that are assigned enforcement and/or inspection duties by the Fire Marshal. The badge shall be a seven (7) point star design with a round inlay.

**8.1 Peace Officer** - Badges shall be issued to those persons that are designated as peace officers. The badge design shall include a gold plated/color with the words HIDALGO COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL on it. It shall have an enameled blue state seal with the words THE GREAT STATE OF TEXAS around it.

**8.2 Non Peace Officer** - Badges may be issued to those non peace officers that under the employ or assignment to the Fire Marshal Office. The badge design for this badge will be a gold plated/color with the words HIDALGO COUNTY FIRE INSPECTOR on it. The state seal shall be of the same color as the badge.

**8.3 Identification Card** – In addition to the standard issue Hidalgo County employee identification card those persons assigned enforcement duties shall be issued an identification card that identifies the bearer as a member of the Fire Marshal's Office.

**8.3.1 Peace Officer** – Those persons commissioned as peace officers shall be issued an identification card with the design and language on it that complies with TCLEOSE rules. It will plainly state on it that the bearer is designated as a peace officer. The front of the card shall read "FIRE MARSHAL" on the right side of the card. It will have a depiction of the badge with a photograph underneath it, with the person's name and title. The employees County ID number shall be on the rear of the card, along with the officers' TCLEOSE uniquely assigned Personal Identification Number.

**8.3.2 Non Peace Officer** – Those persons that are not commissioned as peace officers shall be issued an identification card on which the language "NOT A PEACE OFFICER" is written upon it. The front of the card shall read "INSPECTOR" or "ARSON INVESTIGATOR". It will have a depiction of the badge with a photograph and person's name and title under it. The employees County ID number and other identifying information shall be on the rear of the card.

**8.3.3 Civilian** – Those employees and staff that are assigned office duties who may issue burn permits, review plans or conduct other duties assigned to the Fire Marshal shall be issued identification cards that will be similar in design to the above ones, the front of the card shall read "Civilian" on it. It will have a depiction of the badge with a photograph, the person's name and title under it. The employees County ID number and other identifying information shall be on the rear of the card.

## **9.0 Duty belt, holsters, & other equipment**

**9.1 Materials** – all duty belts, holsters, and pouches shall be of high quality. The material used will be of same for each set. The material for the belt, holster or pouch may be natural leather, synthetic or a combination thereof.

**9.1.1 Duty belt** – The duty belt shall be worn with the Class A Uniform, and shall consist of a black leather belt. Any buckles or metal hardware shall be polished.

**9.1.2 Holster** – A pistol holster of the same material and color shall be affixed to the duty belt. The holster must have at a minimum level II retention. Level III is preferred.

**9.1.3 Pouches** – accessory pouches for handcuffs, pepper spray, baton, magazines, etc. shall be of the same material and color. Pouches design may include a snap type retention device.

**9.1.4 Location** - The pistol holster shall be worn on the strong side alongside the trouser/pant seam. The magazine pouch shall be worn on the opposite side. All other pouches and accessories shall be worn in a manner that is comfortable to the wearer. No pouches/holders may be worn in a manner that will interfere with the unsnapping or draw of the handgun.

**9.1.5 Holster Set** – Issued gun belts will be in a set that shall consist of the Class A set; Tactical Rig that includes a drop down leg holster, and a belt holster, magazine and handcuff combination holder for everyday wear. Each person commissioned as a peace officer shall be issued all three sets.

**9.1.6 Bullet Resistant Vest:** Each employee with a peace officer designation shall be issued a bullet resistant vest that is a minimum of level IIIA, (NIJ Standards) that may be worn under the uniform shirt. Additionally as funds permit, a level IV vest shall be acquired for each employee with a peace officer designation. The latter may be worn over clothing and will have the appropriate insignias and lettering identifying the person wearing it as a peace officer.

**9.1.7 Bullet Resistant Helmet:** Each employee with a peace officer designation shall be issued a bullet resistant helmet with a clear face-shield that is also bullet proof. The headgear shall meet or exceed NIJ standards that are in accordance with military standards.

**9.1.8 Maintenance** –All holsters and pouches that have retention devices shall be inspected once a month for malfunctions and wear. They shall be maintained, cleaned and lubricated as necessary. Any type of malfunction or unusual wear shall be reported immediately and replaced.

**10.0 Civilian clothing** - Personnel assigned to or employed by the Fire Marshal's Office may wear civilian type non-uniform clothing under the following circumstances.

**10.1 Assignment** – Personnel assigned undercover assignments may wear clothing appropriate for the environment that they will be working in.

**10.2 Clerical and Support Staff** - Personnel in those assignments may wear civilian clothing on a daily basis. The clothing must be office appropriate and may be classified as business attire. Clerical and support staff may be issued uniforms for those occasions when they may be deployed to an event or assigned to work in an emergency operations center.

**11.0 Casual Wear Days** – On those days designated as such and with prior supervisory approval employees may wear business casual attire. Clothing worn must be presentable, appropriate and in good taste for an office setting.

**12.0 Other:** Nothing contained within this policy shall be construed to supersede any other county policy or procedure concerning a dress code, uniform policy, or any other policy.

**12.1 Alterations and Upkeep:** Any alterations to uniforms shall be the responsibility of the person issued to. Alterations may be made to the uniforms to insure proper fit. Uniforms will not be altered to the point where they are skin-tight or the alteration will affect the performance of the clothing. Employees are expected to launder and press their own uniforms.

**12.2 Budget:** Any and all items of clothing, footwear, headgear, and personal protective equipment garments that are issued to employees and those persons assigned to the Fire Marshal Office, shall only be purchased with County funds, and in accordance with and under the guise of standard purchasing policies of the County.

**12.3 Personal Purchase:** Employees are discouraged from using personal funds to purchase unique clothing and uniforms that have permanent logos of the County Fire Marshal's Office. Notwithstanding, nothing within this policy will preclude the purchase of clothing, uniforms, and personal protective equipment using employee's personal funds, as long as the quality and style of the clothing, uniforms and personal protective equipment meet or exceed the requirements set forth within this policy. Employees will not be reimbursed for those purchases made from personal funds. The employee purchasing their own uniforms and clothing shall notify the department head of such purchase via a memo that shall be kept in the employees file.

**12.4 Separation:** Employees separating from service or employ of the Fire Marshal's Office shall return all issued clothing, uniforms, personal protective equipment and other gear to the Fire Marshal. Any uniform, clothing, or personal protective equipment that has the Fire Marshal's Badge of office permanently affixed to it, shall be surrendered to the office. Those items that were purchased with personal funds may be kept but a memorandum must be on file detailing their purchase.

APPROVED BY  
OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE OFFICER