

**Frequently Asked Questions
About the Department of the Interior
Dress Code Policy (Personnel Bulletin #8-11)**

Why does Interior need a dress code?

In the past, the Department has issued a Summer Dress Memorandum, and from time to time, questions come from employees about what is appropriate attire. In order to provide more clarity and flexibility, this dress code has been crafted to provide year-round guidance and to recognize that each situation presents unique considerations. It is intended to empower employees and supervisors to exercise their own good judgment, and in some cases, relax what some perceive as arbitrary or unwarranted standards.

This dress code does not identify specific clothing that is appropriate or inappropriate. How does someone determine what is appropriate?

The successful implementation of this dress code policy relies on every employee applying common sense and exercising good judgment as well as consultation among employees and supervisors. Because there are seldom problems with Interior employees wearing inappropriate attire, this dress code is framed in a way that affirms the trust that Interior employees will continue to exercise common sense and good judgment in determining what is appropriate attire.

Why does this dress code provide such wide latitude in defining appropriate attire?

This dress code is intended to reflect the diversity of the Department of the Interior mission, fields of work, geographic locations, climate conditions, local or regional cultures, and work force. It is virtually impossible to provide specific and clear parameters for appropriate dress for our work force when they may be in Hawaii, Alaska, the Rocky Mountain West, or Washington, DC, or when our work ranges from fighting fires and conducting field work to meeting with the public, Members of Congress, or State or tribal officials.

Does this dress code mean that I can apply "Friday business casual" standards 5 days a week?

There is no formal "Friday business casual" policy at the Department of the Interior, however, this policy does allow employees to dress in consideration of the demands and particular attributes of their job, as well as the local and current climate or weather conditions year round. This may be especially important during times of extreme heat or cold as we also strive to conserve energy in Federal buildings.

Does any one of the bulleted criteria supersede another?

No. For this dress code policy to be successful, employees must ensure that their attire meets all the criteria articulated in the dress code policy.

Does this dress code mean I can wear blue jeans to work?

Yes, as long as the blue jeans or blue denim clothing meet all the criteria articulated in the dress code policy.

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What does “...unless otherwise established by that office.” mean?

In some cases, it may make sense for a group of supervisors or the head of an office to make a determination of appropriate attire in order to ensure the consistent application of the policy across a homogeneous workplace. At what level that “office” policy is set should be determined on a case-by-case basis, but generally speaking these decisions should be a local determination based on the criteria articulated in the dress code policy.

What if I am a member of a union?

If your collective bargaining agreement establishes a dress code or policy, or has provisions regarding appropriate attire or uniforms, then the terms of your collective bargaining supersede Personnel Bulletin #8-11; if not, then this dress code policy applies to you. However, management must fulfill any labor-management bargaining obligations prior to implementing the dress code policy.

What if there is a difference of opinion between me and my supervisor regarding appropriate attire in the workplace?

The successful implementation of this policy requires supervisors and employees to apply the principles of consultation, cooperation and communication as well conformance to applicable non-discrimination policies. This policy is intended to promote a more employee-friendly workplace with regard to workplace attire, and supervisors are encouraged to be flexible in their application of the dress code policy as appropriate to the circumstances. If in the course of those conversations between employees and their supervisors it becomes clear that there is a difference of opinion about what is appropriate, supervisors have the final say after consultation with Human Resources to determine how best to apply the dress code policy.

What does “...consistent with established standards for attire in their field of work or profession...” mean?

There is no independent, third party criterion for “established standards”, however, employees can easily observe what other people in their field of work or profession wear to their place of work and match their attire accordingly. To put in another way, it may not be appropriate to wear attire that is on the cutting edge of fashion, or to attempt to establish a new standard for a particular field of work or profession.

If I work in a public setting, does wearing attire that is “...comparable to the attire of those with whom they are doing business or officially meeting...” mean I can dress as casually as the traveling public?

No. All employees should remember that we are the face of the Federal government when we meet with the public. Federal employees are professionals who serve the public. Our attire and appearance should reflect that pride and demonstrate our respect for the citizens we serve.