



Uniform Maintenance in California

Uniforms and Wage and Hour Law

Where uniforms are required by the employer to be worn by nonexempt employees as a condition of employment, the Wage Orders provide that employers must provide and maintain them.

What is a Uniform?

California law states that a uniform is defined to include any type of apparel or accessory of distinctive design or color. Other prescriptions for a uniform could include weight, style, texture, form and make. Basic wardrobe requirements such as “wearing red shirts and khaki slacks” are not considered a uniform, and employers are not required to pay for or maintain this type of clothing.

Safety Apparel

California's Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board requires employers to provide safety apparel and equipment if there is a regulation in place for their particular type of employment. Professions with this requirement usually will need to have safety equipment and apparel paid for and maintained by the employer. Safety apparel is generally termed as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the workplace.

Uniform Maintenance

Employers usually provide uniform maintenance to nonexempt employees. Employers can maintain the uniform or pay the employee a uniform allowance of one hour's pay at minimum wage. Employers can expect employees to reasonably maintain their uniforms, but they cannot impose a financial burden on employees when it comes to purchasing and maintaining uniforms.

Example: Asking an employee to wash their uniform as a normal wash and wear material would be an acceptable request. Asking an employee to wash and iron or dry clean their uniform would be something the employer is expected to handle.

Example: If an employee's uniform is exposed to grease, oil, or other chemicals at work that would require additional time and labor above and beyond normal laundry requirements, the employer would be required to maintain the uniform.

Uniforms and the California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE)

According to California Labor Law, when uniforms are required by the employer to be worn by the employee as a condition of employment, such uniforms must be provided and maintained by the employer. The term “uniform” includes wearing apparel and accessories of distinctive design or color. Detailed information regarding uniforms and their maintenance can be found at: https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/faq_deductions.htm.