
Personal Appearance Standards

1027.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

In order to project uniformity and neutrality, members shall maintain their personal hygiene and appearance to ensure a professional image appropriate for this district and for their assignment.

The procedures contained herein are intended to promote uniformity of the members of the District by addressing specific grooming items. However, nothing herein shall limit the district's ability to address any other grooming or personal appearance issues that may be deemed improper for members of the District.

1027.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Blue Ridge Fire District that all members meet required personal hygiene and grooming standards while on-duty or conducting official business.

1027.3 GROOMING STANDARDS

The following appearance standards shall apply to all members except those whose current assignment would deem them not appropriate or where the Fire Chief or the authorized designee has granted an exception.

1027.3.1 PERSONAL HYGIENE

All members must maintain proper personal hygiene. Examples of improper personal hygiene include but are not limited to dirty fingernails, bad breath, body odor, and dirty or unkempt hair. Any member who has a condition due to a protected category (e.g., race, physical disability) which affects any aspect of personal hygiene covered by this policy may qualify for an accommodation and should report any need for an accommodation to a supervisor or the Fire Chief.

1027.3.2 HAIR

The hairstyle of all members shall be neat in appearance. Hair must be no longer than the horizontal level of the bottom of the uniform patch when the member is standing erect. Hairstyles that extend below the top edge of the uniform collar should be secured in a tightly wrapped braid or ponytail.

1027.3.3 MUSTACHES

A neatly trimmed mustache may be worn. Mustaches shall not extend below the corners of the jaw.

1027.3.4 SIDEBURNS

Sideburns shall not extend below the corners of the jaw and shall be trimmed and neat.

1027.3.5 BEARDS AND GOATEES

Any hair that prevents a face mask from properly sealing is prohibited.

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1027.3.6 FACIAL HAIR

Facial hair other than sideburns, mustaches, and eyebrows shall not be worn, unless authorized by the Fire Chief or the authorized designee.

1027.3.7 COSMETICS

Members are permitted to wear cosmetics of conservative color and amount.

1027.3.8 FINGERNAILS

Fingernails extending beyond the tip of the finger can pose a safety hazard to members working in the field. For this reason, fingernails shall be trimmed so that no point of the nail extends beyond the tip of the finger.

1027.3.9 JEWELRY AND ACCESSORIES

No jewelry or personal ornaments shall be worn by members on-duty on any part of the uniform or equipment, except those authorized within this manual. Members should be mindful of wearing jewelry that can become snagged or caught during performance of fire suppression duties.

- Necklaces or jewelry worn around the neck shall not be visible above the shirt collar.
- It is recommended that members refrain from wearing rings while assigned to suppression.

1027.4 TATTOOS

Tattoos, brands, or mutilations that are inappropriate, as determined at the sole discretion of the Fire Chief, must be covered. Inappropriate marks may include but are not limited to marks that exhibit or advocate discrimination; marks that promote or express gang, supremacist, or extremist group affiliation; and marks that depict or promote drug use, sexually explicit acts, or other obscene material.

1027.5 BODY PIERCING OR ALTERATION

Except for a single-stud pierced earring worn in the lobe of each ear, no body piercing shall be visible while any member is on-duty or representing the District in any official capacity.

Alteration to any area of the body visible in any authorized uniform or attire that is a deviation from normal anatomical features and which is not medically required is prohibited. Such body alteration includes but is not limited to:

- (a) Tongue splitting or piercing.
- (b) The complete or trans-dermal implantation of any material other than hair replacement.
- (c) Abnormal shaping of the ears, eyes, nose, or teeth.
- (d) Branding or scarification.

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1027.6 RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

The religious beliefs and needs of Blue Ridge Fire District members should be reasonably accommodated. Requests for religious accommodation should generally be granted unless there is a compelling security or safety reason and denying the request is the least restrictive means available to ensure security or safety. The Fire Chief should be advised any time a request for religious accommodation is denied.

Those who request to wear headscarves, simple head coverings, certain hairstyles, or facial hair for religious reasons should generally be accommodated absent unusual circumstances.