

AFGE FIREFIGHTERS COUNCIL



80 F. Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

CEO Administration: Jon Ruthenbeck
CEO Policy/Program: Tina Bryant
Legal Counsel: Sandra Adams-Choate

April 2, 2008

UPDATE ON UNIFORM ALLOWANCES FOR DOD FIREFIGHTERS

As many of you know, the DOD FY 2008 Appropriations Bill contained a provision that repealed the Title 10 cap on uniform allowances. However, the repeal of the title 10 provision also requires DOD to issue regulations or manage the amount to be allowed. This places an additional burden on DOD which it is working on.

During the March 20, 2008 DOD F&ESWG teleconference, Mary Olson from DOD's Office of Legislative Affairs, reported on the status of annual uniform allowances for firefighters. First, with respect to the annual repair and replacement allowance, the regulations mentioned above are nearing completion. They should be finalized by the end of April and at that time, it is anticipated that the Services will begin to pay firefighters \$800 annually. AFGE again urged that all services implement the increase at the same time so that there won't be a situation where some firefighters are receiving the increased amount and others are not. The members of the F&ESWG all agreed that this should occur.

With respect to the original issuance allowance, Ms Olson reported that the request to increase the amount allowed for the initial purchase of firefighters' uniforms moved through DOD and was sent to OPM. The request was for \$1,800 and was predicated on the need for duty station uniforms, physical fitness clothing and dress (Class A) uniforms. OPM was not supportive of the request for an allowance for physical fitness clothing and as a result, it was agreed that the Federal Register notice would be to allow an original issuance of \$1,600 for duty station and dress uniforms. The notice was published in the Federal Register on March 9 and the comment period runs until June 9, 2008. Although the members of F&ESWG would like to see an allowance of \$1,800 it was generally agreed that this was the best that can be expected at this time and that we can seek an increase later. For this reason, the Firefighter's Council will not be submitting formal comments on the proposal.

It should be noted that the original issuance allowance is being requested pursuant to the authority under 5 CFR 591.104. That regulation authorizes agencies to establish a higher amount by following the Federal Register publication process. Any higher rate is payable only "in the year in which the employee becomes subject to wear a uniform." In most instances, this means when the employee is first hired. However, if you have not been required to wear a class A uniform and the agency is now making the request, we suggest that you negotiate the proposal in such a way that you agree only when the higher allowance becomes available and can be used to purchase Class A uniforms.

