

FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 4 - 8

ISSUE: INSPECTION AND REPLACEMENT OF BUNKER GEAR

Care and maintenance of firefighter protective clothing is of utmost importance. Life expectancy of protective clothing is dependent on the type of and amount of use to which each garment has been exposed.

Fire departments should develop procedures that ensure that bunker gear is inspected on a regular basis. All protective clothing should be inspected for the following:

- Bunker gear is a component garment – outer shell, thermal barrier, and moisture barrier. Each component needs to be evaluated.
- Char heat and UV damage:
 - all three layers are to be inspected
 - burn holes or discoloration must be repaired
 - look for loss of tensile strength.
- Fabric or material damage:
 - torn, ripped, cut or abraded materials should be taken out of service and repaired or replaced
 - moisture barrier material that is peeling, cracked or chaffed should be replaced.
- Thread or seam damage:
 - all seams should be inspected for thread or seam damage and re-stitched.
- Reflective trim:
 - check for breaks and brittleness and replace when necessary.
- Velcro:
 - torn or worn velcro, or velcro that will not hold its closure, should be replaced.

If any of the above is observed in a garment, it should be repaired immediately. Any loss of strength or weakening of materials to the degree where the material can be torn with manual pressure should be considered unsafe.

A combination of any of the above problems may warrant consideration for replacement.

Note: Garments should be kept clean, as soiled or dirty garments reduce the effectiveness of protection.

When replacing protective turn out clothing it should be appropriately sized to the individual. CAN/CGSB 155.1-M88 addresses the criteria to ensure a proper fit.

UNDER REVIEW