

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chief Russell Thomas

FROM: Joseph P. Riley, Jr., Mayor

DATE: August 29, 2007

SUBJECT: City of Charleston Fire Department Work Uniforms

This morning in the *Post and Courier* there is a report that a South Carolina OSHA official stated that the work uniforms that the City of Charleston Fire Department uses, which are made with polyester, are not in compliance with State OSHA rules. As you know, Chief, the last communication the City had with South Carolina OSHA about these uniforms is the written communication to you from 2004 that they were in compliance. There has been no communication since then, written or verbal, to indicate otherwise.

I am unaware of any statute or regulation that would change the 2004 determination. It is my understanding that there is currently no SC OSHA regulation governing these uniforms. The public information officer quoted in today's newspaper cited a recommendation from the National Fire Protection Association that I have been advised has not been adopted by the State of South Carolina in any form as statute or regulation. Furthermore, it is my understanding that most fire departments in South Carolina would not be in compliance with the standard set forth by the OSHA representative in this morning's paper. It certainly appeared to me to be quite strange that the City of Charleston Fire Department, or any fire department, is advised of a new OSHA requirement by a public information officer's statement in a newspaper.

Chief, I understand that you and a majority of your firefighters prefer the polyester uniforms because they present a crisp, professional appearance – the same reason our Army continues to use polyester uniforms. Nevertheless, I believe it is important to allay any concerns with regard to these uniforms and therefore, I direct you to begin the process of having the work uniforms changed to a material recommended by the national experts of our Fire Review Team.

I have talked with Chief Routley, the excellent director of our Fire Review Task Force, and he concurs with my decision, as I know you do as well.

Cc: Charleston City Councilmembers