



Reported uniform reactions and recommended actions

Symptoms documented Dec. 2, 2016 – June 20, 2017

On Dec. 2, 2016, AFA launched an online uniform reaction survey. Here is a summary of the most commonly reported symptoms that our members have documented in association with wearing the uniforms up until June 20, 2017:

Most of the reported symptoms are consistent with exposure to irritant/sensitizer compounds:

- 82% of respondents reported skin symptoms; of these, the top three reported skin symptoms are burning/itching skin (80%), rash (including pimples/cysts) (78%), and red/irritated skin (70%).
- 65% of respondents reported eye symptoms; of these, the top four reported eye symptoms are burning/itching eyes (66%), red/irritated eyes (62%), swelling around the eyes (35%), and discharge from the eyes (18%).
- 69% of respondents reported respiratory symptoms; of these, the top two reported respiratory symptoms are cough/sore throat (81%) and difficulty breathing (52%).

In addition, 73% of respondents reported non-irritant symptoms:

- Of these, the top three reported non-irritant symptoms are headache (78%), chest pain (21%), and hair loss/thinning (15%). Additional reported symptoms include upset stomach, unusual fatigue, increased heart rate, body aches, partial loss of voice, chemical taste in mouth, and dizziness.

In March 2017, we received the results of chemical testing on 14 of the TwinHill Flight Attendant garments on the property at Envoy, PSA, and Piedmont. As we have [reported](#), the testing found 11 chemicals in various garments. All of the compounds are irritants, three of them are called sensitizers (which means your immune system can react), two are confirmed human carcinogens, four are probable human carcinogens, and eight can disrupt hormones. Add these results to the list of chemicals found in company test results obtained by AFA, per the OSHA Access to Employee Exposure Records standard.

[AFA sent a letter to AA](#) management, asking them to recall the garments, based on the chemicals in the fabrics and the symptoms documented by Flight Attendants. The company has announced new plans to offer an alternate uniform, supplied by Aramark. We are hopeful this could provide a suitable option, but we cannot be certain unless we participate in a fabric testing protocol that assures no adverse health impact to Flight Attendants. AA maintenance workers are wearing Aramark and we have received illness reports from some of those union members.

(See next page...)

We encourage all Flight Attendants to opt out of wearing the current uniforms:

1. Everyone buy (and submit receipts to be reimbursed for) two tops and two gray uniform–like "bottoms." Do this even if you have "old blues";
2. If you have "old blues," keep what you need, but please donate the rest to your flying partners via your AFA safety committee representatives. AFA has organized (and will expand) "Open Closets" of clean, donated items for members who need more pieces; and
3. Bag up your current uniforms and return them to the company.

Why do this? First, testing found some carcinogens and hormone disruptors in the garments, so not having a rash now is not enough assurance that the uniforms are safe to wear – precaution is the best approach. Second, all of us know some Flight Attendants whose rashes and coughing recur when they work around others who still wear the uniforms. We are a family of Flight Attendants - let's take care of ourselves and each other. We are Stronger Together, Better Together.

More information:

4. If you have a uniform reaction (symptoms that develop when you wear the uniform and improve over time when you are not), then document it promptly with your airline and [report to AFA](#);
5. Once you stop wearing the uniforms, remove them from your closets/home. You may wish to dispose of undergarments/tights/socks that you wore with your uniform, too;
6. Try to limit your physical contact with other uniforms, where possible, such as not hugging colleagues who continue to wear the uniforms. Currently, having some contact with potentially-contaminated surfaces - like jumpseats and harnesses - is unavoidable;
7. Keep a daily symptom journal and see a doctor, as necessary. If you see a doctor, bring the information on the two AFA bulletins: [Chemicals in Clothes](#) and [Chemical Testing of Flight Attendant Uniforms](#). Ultimately, fabrics contain complex mixture of chemical compounds, many of which are undefined. Thus, finding the causal factor(s) will be challenging. The most effective way to protect your health is to wear an alternative uniform if the uniform you are wearing is correlated with symptom onset;
8. Follow the workers' compensation rules at your carrier, as necessary, and contact AFA for help.

www.afanet.org/uniforms