

Stepping out in style

Employees sport new uniforms for the first time in 13 years

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Going green by wearing blue, Customer Service Agent **Teri McClain**'s shirt is made of fabric that contains 45 percent recycled soft drink plastic bottles.

Alaska Airlines' chic new uniforms for flight attendants and customer service agents made their formal debut Feb. 23. While the majority of employees like the style and improved practicality of their first new uniform in 13 years, some are experiencing an issue with itchy fabric that the airline is working to resolve.

"I love it. It looks good, it's comfortable and the fabric moves with you," Flight Attendant **Christa Treat** said as she waited to board an aircraft at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. "Hands down, it's 10 times better than our old uniform."

Flight Attendant **Linda Christou** agrees. "I've been with Alaska for 31 years, so I've worn a lot of different uniforms. Our new uniform is very comfortable and stylish. I think it's great," she said.

Seattle Lead Customer Service Agent **Michelle Leveque** also likes the new look and comfort, but is among those who say the fabric is "a little itchy."

"We do have a growing number of folks complaining about irritation from the uniform fabric," Uniforms Manager **Lou Ames** said. "We did wear tests and many fashion shows with nary a complaint, so we are all very surprised. We're working with the manufacturer to pinpoint the source of the irritation and develop a long-term solution. We believe a post-production fabric treatment may be the source of the problem, not a wool allergy as we first suspected. TwinHill is conducting lab tests to identify the cause. In the meantime, laundering the garment following manufacturing instructions may provide the quickest relief. We are making pant liners available and tailoring the uniforms to allow lining for those with a wool allergy."



The updated style was selected after nearly two years of collaboration. The resulting outfits are stylish and brand-appropriate, lighter-weight, easier to keep clean, and more comfortable than the previous outfits, said **Jeff Butler**, vice president of customer service – airports.

The lengthy process to choose the uniforms involved many people, including a survey of all customer service agents and flight attendants and coordination with the unions.

"It was essential to involve the people who would wear the uniforms every day, said **Ann Ardizzone**, vice president of inflight services. "This was a very high priority project. It's important to our brand, especially, to find a uniform that all of our employees are proud to wear."

The uniforms consist of a mix-and-match set of pieces, which include shirts, a vest, dress, sweater, slacks, shorts, jackets, tie and scarf.

The pieces were designed by TwinHill Corporate Apparel, a division of Men's Wearhouse. The color scheme, developed specifically for Alaska Airlines, mixes bronze and blue to represent the sea, sky and earth, as well as the Northwest.

One unique aspect of the uniform is a blue and bronze print scarf with a Native American raven design produced by Bill Helin, a Canadian jewelry designer and graphic artist who has roots in the Tsimshian Nation tribe.

Besides meeting all the requirements to produce uniforms, TwinHill is known for being socially responsible. The blue shirt uniform piece is made of fabric that contains 45 percent recycled soft drink plastic bottles.