**Where Are Our Thermals?**

Due to the massive response to, and the damning results of, my survey last year, London Underground were shamed into taking our Thermal Comfort seriously.

Unfortunately, they haven’t taken it seriously enough – as you are about to discover.

LU recently employed various people and/or departments to look at ‘The Thermal Comfort of Operational Staff Who Work Outside’. During this exercise our uniform was tested to determine its TOG rating.

Here’s what a London Underground HSE advisor said.

* If we wear our company issue shirt, pullover, jacket, fleece and parka **all at the same time**, this will give a combined TOG rating of 7.64.
* Our uniform provides the best way of dealing with different temperatures, (hot or cold)…we can layer up or down.
* ‘Polar clothing’ has a TOG rating of 4.65 – 6.2.
* During extremely cold weather London Underground recommends that ‘polar clothing’ is worn and for practicality the TOG value should not exceed 7.75.

What on earth have we been complaining about then? We’ve already been provided with a totally adequate uniform which has the ability to keep us snug and warm, without being sweaty, in the winter and nice and cool in the summer, haven’t we?

Well, no we haven’t. It appears that London Underground are now suggesting that our uniform is polar clothing….no, that isn’t a joke! Obviously, they don’t have to wear it.

We all know our uniform is heavy, bulky and uncomfortable to wear, it’s also impractical and very restrictive which renders it unsafe as work wear during our very cold winters.

**We need a Thermal base layer that is warm, lightweight and breathable.**

A warm and lightweight base layer will negate the need to wear several thick and bulky items of clothing. London Undergrounds ‘Michelin Man look’ is not desirable. Apart from the ‘look’, wearing all those suggested layers will not only render us unsafe but extremely vulnerable too because our movements will be so severely restricted.

We also need the base layer to be breathable. It should have excellent ‘wicking’ properties which will remove moisture away from the surface of the skin. Our current uniform is **not** breathable, therefore, any moisture will remain trapped inside, close to our skin.

So, why is ‘wicking’ so important? It’s a known scientific fact that warm water freezes quicker than cold water – this is known as the Mpemba effect so, after any kind of movement, trapped moisture will make us colder than before. How strange then that the HSE advisor has also suggested we should move around more to keep warm. Do you mean in our bulky, non-breathable ‘polar’ uniform? The mind boggles!

**The bottom line.**

* Staff will only be issued with Thermal bottoms…..but you have to request them from your manager.
* So far, managers don’t appear to have been informed of this directive.
* Would you all put in a request to your managers for Thermal bottoms and let me know how you get on?

This outcome is a partial victory but it’s really not good enough. Therefore, I will need your continued support to help me fight for an adequate Thermal base layer and some kind of insulated footwear….plus other vital work wear for the winter.

Don’t forget, you are all entitled to a warm up break and a hot drink throughout your shift. This has also been recommended by London Undergrounds HSE advisor.

**Here are some little known ‘London Underground cold weather’ facts**.

Did you know that because we’ve been experiencing such extreme winters, London Underground has spent time and money on the following?

* Changing their winter weather arrangements to tackle these more extreme weather conditions.
* Replacing the AFFF in the extinguishers on outdoor stations with foam that is more ‘stable’ in colder temperatures. Apparently, the extinguishers with the ‘old foam’ had been known to sort of….well….go off on their own.
* All MFMs, (ticket machines that take notes), have been fitted with a ‘Note Heater’. Oh yes, the poor notes got so cold they used to stick together.

Well done everyone for helping to secure this victory. Without your input this wouldn’t have happened.

Sticking together makes us stronger, we definitely need to be that at the moment.

All feedback welcomed and encouraged.