



Hennepin Healthcare Services Union Coalition

We are the Hennepin Healthcare Service Union Coalition. We are the exclusive representatives for some of the many organized labor groups at Hennepin Healthcare. We are writing to you to express a serious concern over Hennepin EMS leadership and HHS leadership's decision to change the EMS uniforms. For the last 60 years, Hennepin EMS Paramedics and Dispatchers have worn brown/tan uniform shirts with brown pants. They are identified, recognized, and expected to look the way they do throughout the communities we serve and beyond. Their uniform represents the dedication, commitment, sacrifice, and knowledge that it takes to be a Hennepin County Paramedic or Dispatcher.

Following the civil unrest in Minneapolis last year, HEMS management began the process of changing the current uniforms. The members of HCAPE were told by HEMS leadership the decision was made by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) of HHS and the decision was out of their hands. The basis of this decision was the safety of employees and to better distinguish Hennepin EMS staff from police officers. A "uniform committee" was formed by HEMS management to give the impression that frontline staff, who will be the ones out in the community wearing the uniforms, would be afforded the opportunity to provide input. Ultimately four different color schemes were submitted to the ELT, who would make the final decision.

The HHS ELT ultimately selected "LA PD blue" uniform shirts and "LA PD blue" uniform pants as the new uniform for HEMS. Members of HCAPE were told in multiple emails from HEMS leadership that the uniform change is for safety reasons and to distinguish staff from law enforcement. Our concern is this effort has failed to separate HCAPE members from law enforcement. If this new uniform is implemented, HEMS paramedics and dispatchers are going to look like police officers and abandon the well-established uniform that is widely recognized in the local area by both patients and the general public. The "LA PD blue" palette is the color of choice of most law enforcement agencies throughout Hennepin County. The new uniform is extremely close or identical to the following law enforcement agencies within Hennepin County:

Bloomington Police Department
Brooklyn Center Police Department
Brooklyn Park Police Department
Champlin Police Department
Corcoran Police Department
Crystal Police Department
Dayton Police Department
Deephaven Police Department
Eden Prairie Police Department
Edina Police Department
Golden Valley Police Department
Hopkins Police Department
Maple Grove Police Department
Medina Police Department

Metro Transit Police Department
Minnetonka Police Department
Minnetrista Police Department
New Hope Police Department
Orono Police Department
Osseo Police Department
Plymouth Police Department
Richfield Police Department
Robbinsdale Police Department
Rogers Police Department
South Lake Minnetonka Police Department
St. Anthony Police Department
St. Louis Park Police Department

A significant amount of money has been allocated for this uniform change. Outfitting each paramedic, dispatcher, and command staff in six pairs of pants, six shirts, vest carriers, etc. comes at huge cost. We object to the expenditure of several hundred thousand dollars for a misguided aesthetic change. We vehemently object, considering the large group of our members forced to take pay cuts and endure the threat of layoffs during the worst health crisis in a generation. HEMS leadership and HHS ELT have claimed that the uniform change was for staff safety, yet they routinely embed our union brothers and sisters with MPD “strike teams” and other police agencies with the new law enforcement style uniforms. HCAPE members are being put at increased risk of injury or death and HEMS management is acting in direct opposition of the stated values of the ELT and the organization as a whole.

Ultimately the state of Minnesota has statutory language that covers the colors law enforcement personnel are allowed to wear. Blue for police, brown for sheriff’s deputies, maroon for state troopers and green for conservation officers. We believe that a commonsense strategy would involve avoiding these colors in any current or future uniform change. We reaffirm our members roles in directly caring for patients and providing the much-needed support services to keep our communities safe and healthy.

Union Members demand Hennepin Healthcare treat all workers with dignity and respect our rights and our union contracts.

We further demand

- HEMS management and the HHS ELT immediately halt any implementation of the new “LA PD blue” uniforms.
- HEMS management and the HHS ELT provide the Hennepin Healthcare Services Union Coalition a full financial analysis of what this misguided aesthetic change will cost the organization as whole.
- HEMS management and the HHS ELT make meaningful and sustained efforts to engage community groups, especially those negatively impacted by law enforcement, to gain input on any current or future HEMS uniform change.

Labor Union Members at HHS. 4,000 Strong. Really Strong.

Respectfully,

Hennepin Healthcare Services Union Coalition