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UPS unveils 'major redesign' of driver uniforms as part of 'company-wide transformation'

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UPS is giving its 125,000 drivers a makeover.

United Parcel Service Inc. (NYSE: UPS) said Wednesday it's phasing in the first major redesign of the company's recognizable "Browns" corporate uniform since the early 1920s. The Atlanta-based logistics giant said it's the "most significant" change since the company's drivers began wearing shorts in the early 1990s.

"UPS is in the midst of a company-wide transformation, and a significant part of that effort involves a cultural and brand shift that embraces innovation, speed and relevance," said Chief Marketing Officer Kevin Warren in a news release. "Our new uniforms have a more contemporary look consistent with the company's ongoing transformation efforts."

UPS said the updates are designed to "improve driver comfort, safety and performance" with stretchy fabrics that provide better range of motion and moisture wicking to keep employees cooler.

Here are the changes UPS announced:

A pullover polo-style shirt with a three-button collar, made from a performance micro pique fabric that wicks moisture, improves breathability and enhances employee comfort in warm temperatures. The shirt is available in a short-sleeved version, and for the first time, includes color blocking on the sides.

UPS brand marks on the front and back of the shirt are embedded with reflective technology to make employees significantly more visible in poor light conditions. In addition, reflective stripes are being added to the shirt sleeves as well as the winter cap.

Pants are now made with stretch twill, with a lower waist and more modern fit.

A baseball-style mesh hat is also made of moisture wicking heat-regulating mesh material, as opposed to plastic. The company also offers a wide-brimmed hat for sun protection.

UPS said outfitting its driver workforce takes nearly 4 million yards of brown cloth and 2 million yards of brown thread for the 375,000 hats, 405,000 shirts, 375,000 pairs of trousers and 290,000 pairs of shorts. The company did not provide financial details.

UPS said old uniform pieces will be recycled, and that the most popular current shirt — a "shirt-jack" with a squared off bottom, worn untucked — will still be available.

UPS spokesperson Dan McMackin told Atlanta Business Chronicle the new uniforms are an "outward sign that we are updating our entire organization," which includes new shipping features and tools for doing business.

He likened it to 10 years ago when the company's we changed its UPS shield.



AUDRA MELTON VIS UPS

"We took the graphic package tied with a bow off the top of the shield to reflect the fact that we no longer were just a small package delivery firm, accepting packages wrapped with craft paper and tied up with a string," McMackin said. "We signaled with our new shield that we are now a supply chain management company that 'synchronizes global commerce.' We wanted people to know then and now that we move cars for the automotive sector, we manage the entire supply chain for the healthcare sector, and we help design tools to make ecommerce easy and profitable."

UPS' fashion makeover is not nearly as dramatic as that of Delta Air Lines Inc. (NYSE: DAL), which in 2017 launched the most expensive uniform upgrade in the company's history, rolling out bold 'Passport Plum' outfits for tens of thousands of flight attendants. Despite reports of possible symptomatic reactions to their new outfits and complaints about the apron's heaviness, the Atlanta-based airline has been recognized in the fashion and beauty space.

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