

## Is Your Summer Dress Code Too Hot to Handle?

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Oh the joy of Texas summers! With balmy 104 degree days and a sun that could melt pavement, many employers are left to decide whether to crank up the A/C or relax dress code policies and risk turning up the heat with skimpier wardrobes. Most businesses have official dress codes, but often in the heat and humidity of the summer months, employees push the envelope in search of relaxed standards. Where should the line be drawn and what are the legal risks employers may face when it comes to restricting employees from wearing certain types of clothing?

If the line is crossed between office-appropriate and too-much-skin, employers need to know whether enforcement of dress codes may be unlawful. Although there are no federal laws that directly address employer dress codes, such policies cannot be used to discriminate against employees on the basis of protected traits such as gender, race, religion or disability, to name a few. But despite such protection, some employees periodically try to take advantage of their rights.

Smart employers will communicate and implement their dress code before issues arise, lest a wayward employee claims that the change of rules unfairly targeted them. When reviewing or forming a dress code, be sure it is reasonable, nondiscriminatory and founded on legitimate business needs. This way you can beat the summer heat, without getting burned by a cold employee.

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