



Press Release No. 3 – Background Report

A+A 2013: Top international event for protective clothing and work wear

Corporate fashion is in ever-greater demand – an ideal combination of image, function and protection

Style and protection are becoming more compatible all the time. Modern protective clothing and work wear combine both style and function. Purchasing decision-makers from different industries and companies of all sizes can satisfy themselves of this at the A+A 2013 exhibition in Düsseldorf, the leading international trade fair and conference on personal protection, operational safety and health in the workplace (5 – 8 November). With over 1,600 exhibitors from about 60 countries, it is one of the most important market platforms in the world for work wear, including for example the ever more popular sector of corporate fashion/image wear.

More and more industries, trades and service companies are choosing protective clothing and work wear inspired by fashion, with the aim of sharpening up their brand image and brand management for the internal and external representation of their company.

Dr. Walter Eichendorf, Deputy Managing Director of Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung, DGUV (German social accident insurance) and a member of the A+A 2013 advisory board, cuts to the chase: "The advertising effect for a local business or tradesman could not be better." "People can see straight away from clothing or a car that plumbers, electricians or painters are working in the area. If they're looking for a tradesman themselves, they'll ask the neighbours how pleased they were with the work. They may even make contact directly because they can still clearly remember the name and company logo,"

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Eichendorf continues. More and more, the company that stands out is the one that comes across as professional and friendly.

"Service companies have to face increasingly stiff external competition and have to position themselves not just in relation to the hard facts of marketing such as pricing, but also to the softer side," says Thomas Lange, Managing Director of German Fashion Modeverband Deutschland (Düsseldorf). Staff wearing the company's colours become ambassadors for the company - irrespective of its size or how well-known it is.

Staff as company ambassadors

Whether it's kitchen fitting, plumbing and heating or even window cleaning - in the customer's environment, the right appearance matters. However, those employed in industry, trades or the service sector also have their own interest in their outfit: anyone wearing work clothes in public, for example on their way to work or going for lunch, wants the clothing to look good and be flattering. "Even though the key feature is functionality, no one buys things any more that don't look stylish," says Carla Teichmüller, Product Manager for A+A exhibitor Bierbaum-Proenen. The work wear specialist, which has its headquarters in Cologne, has therefore been working for years on using sporty solutions in line with the zeitgeist. "Clothing has to look modern but mustn't look unusual, so it can be used over a long period," explains Rainer Glaesemer, clothing specialist at W.L. Gore & Associates (Putzbrunn), which has been exhibiting at A+A in Düsseldorf for many years.

Even for fashion-inspired corporate wear which provides lighter protection, which is actually what is required of protective clothing and work wear. It has to serve multiple purposes. First, there are the hard facts, i.e. the characteristics required by the market: it should be hard-wearing, long lasting, as resistant to soiling as possible and be able to be cleaned easily, without damaging its quality if it's cleaned as industrial laundry. "Increased comfort for the wearer is really important,"

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says Stephan Schwartz from A+A exhibitor Bardusch (Ettlingen). "Whenever we speak to people, it always comes back to the wearer's need for comfort, then protection and being lightweight." The cut should be modern and there should be a wide choice of colours. Customers also expect clothing to be available in all sizes and women's sizes. The range of sizes has increased gradually over recent years, so there are far fewer problems with fitting, even though clothing tends to be cut smaller than before. Corporate fashion also has an effect internally and externally. Employees are clothed in line with the most advanced technology and therefore feel particularly valued. A sense of solidarity is created between employees. The company's corporate identity is worn outwardly and will hopefully stick in the minds of potential new customers. The impression of professional skill is conveyed. These are good reasons for industry, trades and service companies to dress their staff in corporate fashion that goes beyond the statutory requirements of personal protective clothing (PPE).

Welcome expansion of different industries

"After a slump in sales during the financial crisis in 2009, companies invested more in work wear and occupational safety. 2010 and 2011 saw a real upturn in the industry," reports Thomas Lange. This development shows that many employers, safety officers and buyers have been convinced of the good sense and/or the necessity of protective clothing and corporate fashion.

There is also something very positive to report from the car industry. In this sector, it's primarily the premium manufacturers who can hold their ground in spite of generally difficult market conditions, and they have recently been able to increase their operating profits. For this reason, they remain attractive customers for corporate fashion/image wear suppliers, as Joachim Geyer, Key Account Manager for Kübler Workwear (A+A 2013 exhibitor) observes, "Jobs haven't been lost in the car industry, but we are seeing a shift in jobs."

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The construction sector is also growing. The Zentralverband des Deutschen Baugewerbes (German Construction Industry Association) is expecting growth of at least 2% in 2013. Impetus towards growth particularly involves the construction of new homes. For the trades, an important target user group for protective clothing suppliers, this means a stable to positive order position.

"However, the need for equipment is mainly arising in newer occupational fields, such as wind power and plant manufacturers, companies putting up pylons for electricity supply transmission lines, transport and logistics, urban and water works and in the recycling sector," says Geyer. This generally means serving users in as focussed a way as possible. "The demand for professional clothing has increased categorically," confirms Carla Teichmüller (from brand manufacturer Bierbaum-Proenen).

A+A Fashion Show presents the trends

At the A+A 2013 exhibition in November, as well as getting a look at exhibitor's offerings, there will be an impressive A+A fashion show every day of the fair (Live Pavilion right next to Halls 4 + 5) with the participation of leading suppliers of corporate fashion and protective clothing: Classic blue overalls are out. Fresh colours and design, more variety and possible combinations, and ease of care are the order of the day. Gone are the two-piece outfits of overalls and a jacket. The layering principle found in sport has arrived in the world of work. Younger users love sweatshirts, fleece jackets, hoodies and waistcoats, but softshell jackets are popular too. Some work wear specialists also carry waterproof pilot jackets. Staff also enjoy putting an outfit together themselves. Different combinations are possible because the collections are modular. "Using our modular system, people can choose everything to match, including polo shirts and sweatshirts," says Werner Münnich from CWS boco in Dreieich (also an A+A exhibitor). The trend towards individualisation isn't stopping when it comes to the world of work.

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Progress in ergonomics and functionality

Fabrics have become much lighter in the meantime, but can withstand almost as much as heavier materials used to. We also have the opportunity to create contemporary, stylish designs with these lighter fabrics. Input comes less from fashion than from sport.

A lot has changed in the way clothing is cut, as the A+A 2013 exhibition will show spectacularly. "Designers are taking their inspiration from street wear and sportswear," says Annika Busche from Fristads Kansas. "Low waists and jeans-seat cuts are now widely used in work wear." So that trousers cut to flatter the figure also meet their functional requirements, seams positioned further forward mean, for example, that movement is not impaired that when getting into a car or kneeling. Any type of pads can be inserted into surface mounted knee pockets. Preformed sleeves and trouser legs are intended to limit freedom of movement as little as possible. The same applies to sleeve volume and stretch folds. Hidden inserts in the jacket ensure that it doesn't ride up over your head while you're working and expose your back.

Other details of the cut include a longer jacket and trousers with a higher rear waistline, for users who often have to work on their knees. Pockets on painters' clothes are designed so that brushes and other tools can be stored safely but at the same time be easy to reach. Invisible Cordura reinforcement (a special spinning and weaving technique using polyamide fibres) and stitching ensure that pockets won't pull off or tear under heavy stress. Reflective piping and overprints increase visibility in a stylish way.

Colour comes into play - company logos as large as fashion labels

The demands of the market are also finding expression in the choice of colours available. The choice now seems to be infinite. Two-tone colour is right on trend. More shades than that would not work, particularly because company logos and emblems being used as decorative elements play a big part in image management. Like well-known fashion

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labels, they are increasingly large and are prominently displayed on the chest, back and upper arms. Popular colours are royal blue and grey. Since they don't show dirt as easily, dark blue and black are also enjoying great popularity. Grey is often brightened up with red. "Certain associations and companies still want work wear in their corporate colours, but they're not sticking to the traditional trade colours anymore," Bierbaum-Proenen staff observe.

"In larger companies, corporate fashion has long been a part of the company's culture. However, now ever more small and middle sized companies can afford corporate fashion - whether it's for the joiner on site, the baked goods sales team or the caretaker service," says Thomas Lange (German Fashion). As a rule, colour is added to the clothing that is typical for the company in some way. "For example, public utility companies use this option to set themselves apart as a supplier in a highly competitive market," according to Joachim Geyer (Kübler). The Bielefeld public utility companies dress their staff in the same blue as the company logo, and the Osnabrück public utilities dress their customer-facing employees in anthracite with red.

Service around clothing

Another trend in the world of work is the use of textile services. According to Peter Böge, Chairman of the Industrieverband Textil Service e.V. (industry association of textile services), the textile services industry is looking ahead with confidence. No wonder, as their product range is multifaceted - it isn't industry-specific and it doesn't matter whether their clients are small companies or large businesses.

Alongside high-quality textiles and attendance, textile hire and textile leasing service companies offer hygiene services and quality management for example. A widespread model is a company purchasing the clothing itself and then getting a professional laundry firm to wash and care for it. This guarantees proper cleaning and hygiene. Even industrial washing is getting gentler on products. This in

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turn extends the life-cycle and make products more economical. Now even the increasingly popular sweat shirts, t-shirts and polo shirts are more suitable for industrial washing.

Sustainability shifts into focus

Sustainability is also an important keyword. More and more companies are aware of their responsibilities in this area. They are developing guideline criteria and carrying out audits. A+A exhibitors like Kwintet (with its brand Fristads Kansas) and Bierbaum-Proenen are members of the FairWear Foundation. "Customers are specifically asking for this," says Carla Teichmüller (BP). She says they are interested in transparency and fairness for the whole production chain. The FairWear Foundation represents social standards based on openness and transparency. These include fair payment, a ban on child labour, the freedom to join a union and the right to collective representation. CWS boco, on the other hand, is a member of the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI). This is a non-profit organisation that aims to guarantee and continually improve socially responsible trade in the supply chains of European business undertakings. As a rule, work wear manufacturers' products are tested for harmful substances and are frequently certified using Oeko-tex-Standard 100.

Whichever initiative companies choose to sign up to, they are trying to show they are trustworthy by following these philosophies. They are also hoping it will give them added value in international competition. This is because environmental protection and sustainability are increasingly important for customers as they look around A+A 2013.

For more information about A+A 2013, its programme, exhibitors and products please visit our website at: <http://www.AplusA.de>

Trade journalist: Kirsten Rein (freelance textiles and fashion journalist), Frankfurt am Main.

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