

"Apples to Apples": Questions you should be asking...

There are many components to consider in selecting a technical uniform. The following is here to assist you in your quest for the best product at the best price.

1) What is the waterproof rating of the fabric, and where does the fabric come from?

Comments: The higher the number, the better the rating, i.e. 20,000 mm is great. Results of tests from reputable fabric companies should be included with information about the fabric. It is best to use a quality name-brand fabric and laminate or coating such as Toray's Entrant (of which there are various levels of waterproofness and breathability ratings), or Gore-Tex. Many suppliers use generic name-brands that they market under their own name-brands, such as "Carbonate Soft 2000", making it hard to compare quality. Often the "2000 means that it is 2000 waterproof rating, but you should find out where the fabric comes from, what other outerwear companies use this fabric and in what lines to help you determine its performance.

2) What is the fabric breathability rating?

Comments: This is important because anyone can make a waterproof fabric or membrane (plastic or rubber), but the technology comes in making it breathable so that you don't get wet from the inside. Many companies don't state what the breathability rating is, and this should be a matter of concern. The higher the number (i.e. 20,000), the better the breathability.

3) What is the difference between laminate and coating?

Comments: A laminate is a single, separate layer that is "laminated" (glued with special breathable glue), to the back of the outer fabric shell. Coating is a substance that is "spread" on the back of the fabric in its pliable state. Not all coatings and laminates are created equal. (See waterproof/breathable info above). This is the single most important feature that makes a fabric waterproof and breathable. Durable Water Repellency (DWR) is an application on the top of the fabric. It is what actually makes water bead on the shell, and roll off. This can wear off over time depending on the quality of the DWR. So the laminate or coating is the most important to ensure lasting quality.

4) Insulation or Shell?

Comments: Insulation comes in various weights, and comes compressed or fluffy. The higher the weight of the insulation (i.e. 100 grams), the warmer the jacket. Compression is mostly more a matter of style. There are various types of shells as well, and shells can be lined or not. Shells can be 2-layer, or 3-layer, and one is not necessarily better than the other depending on the function. A 3-layer garment usually does not have a separate lining or insulation, because that layer is already sandwiched in to the fabric. A 2-layer garment often has a separate lining (which really accounts for the 3rd layer). Whether something is 2-or-3 layer does not determine the waterproofness, breathability, or quality of the item. It does, however affect weight and compactability. Most of our products are 2-layer with lining. The lining enables us to include functional pockets on the inside and makes for easy movement when working. Linings can be mesh, tricot mesh, or 210T, etc. depending on the primary purpose of the jacket preference of the customer. If you choose, you can order 3-layer construction, for group orders of 150 or more. Custom orders must be made 6 months in advance.

5) Are ALL seams sealed (taped), or just "critical" seams?

Comments: Punching needle holes in waterproof fabric will cause potential leaking. Therefore, the best outerwear requires 100% seam sealing. Many vendors don't seam seal, or only "critical seam seal". There is no law or standard on what defines "critical" so is left up to the vendor. We believe it is important to seam seal every seam in our jackets and pants, whether you choose the Tallac line or the Pacific Crest line of our clothing. Those who work outside do not have the same luxuries to go in and have a cup of hot chocolate when they get cold and wet. So while partial seam sealing or even no seam sealing may be fine for the consumer, it is not preferable for industrial use.

6) Can I get the same uniform in the same colors next year? How about the year after if we skip a year of ordering?

Comments: Continuity from year-to-year is important and commercial brand name suppliers cannot deliver this effectively. This is because their primary customer is the consumer who wants new styles and colors every year. Whereas, Mountain Uniforms' primary customer is you, the uniform buyer. It is our business to deliver the same item in the same color to you any time you want it. Minimums of 20 or more apply, depending on the style, and a 5-6 month advance order is necessary.

7) Are there other considerations I should be aware of?

Comments: Consider the functions of the jacket, and the job the person will be doing when wearing it. You may want radio pockets, or nametag slots to ensure the nametags don't come off when working. Or you may want zip-off sleeves for versatility, or attached hoods so they aren't lost. Consider your climate to help you choice both fabric and insulation. You should also consider the overall image you want to convey, and if it is consistent with your company or organization. Uniforms are the landscape of an area, and can aid in a resort customer's confusion or comfort level.

If you have any questions please feel free to give Mountain Uniforms a call at (775) 831-7670 or drop us an email info@mountainuniforms.com.