

Train drivers in skirts after shorts ban

11th June, 2013



Male train drivers in Sweden have come up with a novel way of staying cool in the summer heat after their company banned the wearing of shorts. The men are instead wearing

skirts to work as they do not appear on the list of banned clothing that forms the uniform code for rail staff. The drivers' employers, the transportation company Arriva, instilled the ban on shorts after it took over operations in January. Drivers had previously worn them for years when conditions got hot in the summer. The mercury in the drivers' cabin can reach 35 degrees, which is ten degrees above what the World Health Organisation deems to be a comfortable working environment.

Arriva's communications manager Tomas Hedenius told a local newspaper that the company did not mind men wearing skirts. He said: "Our thinking is that one should look decent and proper when representing Arriva and the present uniforms do that. If the man wants to wear a skirt, then that is OK." He added: "To tell them to do something else would be discrimination." Driver Martin Akersten said his passengers didn't seem to have any problems with his uniform. He said: "Of course people stare at you a little when you are on the platform, but you just have to put up with it...So far no-one has said anything." He added: "I don't mind as it's more about comfort." Arriva is set to discuss its dress code again later this year.

Sources: BBC / The Daily Mail / The Independent

Writing

If workers want to wear shorts to work in hot weather, they should be allowed to do so. Shorts should never be banned. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

train drivers / staying cool / banned / shorts / uniform / hot conditions / comfortable / communications / decent / discrimination / passengers / platform / dress code

True / False

- All Swedish train drivers (male and female) must wear skirts to work. T / F
- Male drivers are allowed to wear skirts but not shorts. T / F
- Drivers have never been allowed to wear shorts. T / F
- The WHO says 25 degrees is best to work in. T / F
- The train company has no problem with men wearing skirts. T / F
- The company said smartness to the public was most important. T / F
- A train driver said he disliked people staring at his skirt. T / F
- The rail company will not talk about its dress code again. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. come up with | a. rather than |
| 2. novel | b. tolerate |
| 3. instead of | c. considers |
| 4. instilled | d. correct |
| 5. deems | e. original |
| 6. proper | f. gaze |
| 7. discrimination | g. implemented |
| 8. stare | h. rules |
| 9. put up with | i. thought of |
| 10. code | j. prejudice |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you think about what you read?
- Why do you think the company banned shorts?
- Will the drivers be cooler in skirts?
- Do you think it's OK for male train drivers to wear skirts?
- Should the company make special skirts for men?
- How might skirts for men and women be designed differently?
- What looks smarter, a skirt or trousers?
- In what other jobs might it be better for a man to wear a skirt?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. come up with a novel | a. the list |
| 2. staying | b. at you a little |
| 3. they do not appear on | c. operations in January |
| 4. after it took over | d. cool |
| 5. The mercury in the drivers' cabin | e. up with it |
| 6. communications | f. code |
| 7. one should look decent | g. way |
| 8. people stare | h. and proper |
| 9. you just have to put | i. can reach 35 degrees |
| 10. dress | j. manager |

Discussion – Student B

- How "revolutionary" was it for women to start wearing trousers?
- What might be beneficial for men wearing a skirt?
- If a man was told "no skirt" in another job, would it be discrimination?
- Why did women start wearing skirts way back in history?
- Are skirts more practical than trousers?
- Will men wearing skirts become common in the future?
- What questions would you like to ask one of the drivers?
- What do you think his answers might be?

Spelling

- a vleon way of staying cool
- men are neasdti wearing skirts
- the rnfuoim code
- spyivlrueo worn them for years
- the myeucrr in the drivers' cabin
- working oteirnmnevn
- mticaionmsucno manager
- one should look ndecte and proper
- something else would be ntocasdniriimi
- rgeessapn didn't seem to have any
- people sreta at you
- it's more about ofocmtr

Answers – Synonym Match

1. i	2. e	3. a	4. g	5. c
6. d	7. j	8. f	9. b	10. h

Role Play

Role A – Happy male train driver

You don't care about the ban on shorts. Tell the others three reasons why. The most important thing for you is to be cool in the summer heat. You think a skirt is much cooler than shorts and are happy to wear a skirt. You will also follow the company dress code. Tell the other driver he is over-reacting.

Role B – Angry male train driver

You are furious that your company has banned male drivers from wearing shorts. Tell the others three reasons why. You want all men to go on strike until shorts are not banned. You can't believe the other driver is happy. Tell the rail boss the company is harming your human rights.

Role C – Rail company boss

You think ban on shorts is perfectly acceptable. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell the angry driver that a skirt is cooler in hot weather than shorts. Tell him bank workers and other professionals do not wear shorts to work. Tell the passenger wearing shorts is not a human right.

Role D – Human rights passenger

You are angry with the rail company for banning shorts. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell the boss (s)he does not care for the health of the drivers. Other workers wear shorts in hot weather. Shorts are smart and professional looking. Encourage a drivers' strike to bring back shorts.

Speaking - Menswear

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the most OK things for men to wear/have at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- skirt
- wedding dress
- lipstick
- pink trousers
- stiletto shoes
- designer handbag
- hair band
- T-shirt with bows/ribbons/sequins

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.