

First Manassas 11 NY First Fire Zouaves Impression guidelines

Below are some general comments regarding the 11th NY FZ impression “guidelines” for the 2026 First Manassas/Bull Run Living History (FM/BRLH). Please know that this is not telling anyone to replace what they already have or that you must have these exact items to participate at the event, but to tell you what is correct so it may influence your pending/future purchases that you choose to make. Fact is most everyone should have or able to gain easy, low-cost access to many of these items.

Hat- Most common worn seem to be fezzes of either dark blue or red in color, both with dark blue tassels. (The entire regiment were issued dark blue fezzes with their dark blue trousers.) We also have photographic evidence that men were wearing the kepi that was issued with the 1st issue uniform. It is a red kepi with red top and a dark blue band. This type of cover is certainly acceptable as well. A standard federal issue kepi or forage cap covered with a white linen havelock is also acceptable. A small number of civilian slouch hats and wheel caps are acceptable.

Shirt- The 11th NYFZ was originally issued a jacket but there are no photographs, descriptions, or sketches of this coat. At FM/BR the 11th had shed down to their shirt sleeves, which is what we will be portraying. The most recently issued shirts to the regiment were red wool civilian overshirts. These were NOT the bib-front fire shirts. The shirts worn by the regiment would have been a mix of the shirts they were issued and shirts that were brought from NYC (Fireman’s or era work shirts). The two most common colors were red and white in the photographs we have seen. The only shirts that would have been made from cotton is a white shirt or a checkered one of private purchase. It is *not* correct to have a fireman’s shirt out of cotton material as this was considered an over shirt or work shirt which were considered an outer garment, so cotton would not have been appropriate. The type of shirt to be considered would have been either a woolen fireman’s shirts or civilian work shirts (wool or cotton), for which red was the most common color of the period.

If you want to wear a cotton shirt, *it must be a white civilian or (to a much lesser extent) a checkered shirt*. These are encouraged as we only had a couple of guys wearing them at prior events, but they likely accounted for a good percentage of the shirts that were worn. Not to mention they will be your coolest option since white reflects the heat. Red shirts, fireman's pattern, military-issue, or just civilian pattern are acceptable as well, but should be of period wool flannel. Grey wool flannel is also acceptable. A proper shirt as noted is critical to the impression. The shirts were **always** worn tucked-in to the trousers.

Kerchiefs- many of the photos show the FZ’s with a kerchief tied “nautical/seaman style” around the neck. This look was common for the period. This kerchief should be a dark navy blue or black. Ideally, the item should be made of silk. *Optional item*.

Sash- *DO NOT WEAR A SASH*.

Fireman's belts- *THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THESE WERE WORN BY THE REGIMENT. Only Francis Brownell is documented to have worn one, and that was for a studio photograph, not in the field. Also, Brownell was with a Troy, NY, fire department, not one from New York City, which had different equipment than NYC fire companies.*

Fire Badges/ Hose Company Badges- each fire company had a badge with their Engine, Hook & Ladder, or Hose Company number on the badge. These were worn by members of the FZ and are seen in period photos & paintings. Reproduction badges have been cast and will be available for purchase and make an incredibly fabulous addition to the FZ impression. Worn on your shirt, most commonly at the center of your shirt or on your left breast.

Trousers - Dark blue foot trousers. However, this item is critical since the 11th NY FZ were never in light blue kersey trousers many of us already have. Dark Blue issue

Trousers are key to the impression. If you need to purchase one item for the FZ impression THIS IS IT!

Leggings – ONE man of the 11th NY is pictured wearing the original russet-brown leather leggings with ball buttons in the POW photos. *BEST TO AVOID THEM!*

Footwear: - Normal Jefferson booties.

Weaponry-The 11th NY was carrying a mix of 1855 muskets and sharps rifles, but few would have these. 61s and 42s are encouraged.

Accoutrements- Early war traps and such- these should be part of your regular early war impression, and you should just use what you already have.

NOTE – SUSPENDERS ARE NOT CORRECT TO BE WORN WITH OVERSHIRTS! A civilian or military waist-belt can be worn over your trousers to keep them up.

Random thoughts on the event- This is going to be THE big event of 2026. In that vein, though not an official NR event, many NR units will be present. If you wish not to do any part of the 11th NY FZ impression you can fall in with your regular federal blue uniform and participate alongside those of us doing the FZ impression as part of one of our NR sister units.

As it stands right now, it would appear we are going to have sizeable company portraying the 11th NY FZ. The idea has also been presented to the NR that any NR unit that will be attending may join us in the FZ impression. Initial reaction to this request was favorable. With all these factors coming into play, estimation on the *conservative* side would have us in a 50–60-man 11th NY FZ company. Registration (\$25) closes on xxxxx. Registration info is available online at <https://cwhi.org/manassas165>.

Any questions please do not hesitate to contact us. We will be more than happy to address all your questions or concerns.

Please note that many of the key items you will need to purchase can be used at other times during the season. The shirt, of course, speaks for itself and the dark blue trousers can double as to enhance your early war impression(s). Dark blue tassels are available from the QM or a havelock can be improvised easily or picked up for a very nominal fee for use on a kepi.

Group buys of the items mentioned here are being coordinated so if you need something please reach out. Thank you.



