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NEWS

Bring your undies out

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It's a common nightmare: You show up for work only to realize you've forgotten to put on your clothes. There you are in your skivvies, dressed down for all to see. In truly horrifying versions of the dream, your underwear is torn or stained in the most embarrassing of places.

You wake in your pajamas, relieved.

But wait. A company that peddles underwear over the Internet wants to make this nightmare an all-too-real daytime actuality. Freshpair.com has spearheaded a movement to enshrine Aug. 13 as National Underwear Day, a day when everyone shows up at work with bras, boxers, briefs, girdles, control garments, panties, thongs, crew necks and camisoles intentionally exposed.

Before you get your knickers in a twist, know the day is envisioned not as X- or even R-rated, but more PG. "We want people to do this tastefully," says freshpair.com public relations director Sean Evans. "To observe the day, you can just leave a shirt button unbuttoned or wear your pants a little bit lower, to show the top band on your underwear. We don't want people running around in their unmentionables or wearing their underwear over their business suits."

Freshpair.com is promoting National Underwear Day, Evans says, as a way to bring attention to the fact that the undergarment industry represents a \$12 billion bonanza, so it's high time intimate apparel got the respect it deserves. (Apparently, starlets parading around at movie premiers in the near-nude and rap stars rapping with their drawers hanging out isn't enough.)

Of course, National Underwear Day is also a great way for freshpair.com to get free publicity, but Evans contends that's beside the point. Evans — who in a telephone interview from his company's headquarters in New York's SoHo district revealed he was wearing a pair of Abercrombie & Fitch boxers, not showing — said that a handful of models will be prowling Manhattan today in their unmentionables, pestering pedestrians to sign a petition to call for a formal proclamation enshrining today as National Underwear Day.

"Our real goal is to get the day included in Chase's Calendar of Events," he said.

That shouldn't be too hard, says Kathy Keil, associate director for Chase's, the catalog that compiles a plethora of local and national observances, from the well-known to the obscure, from Christmas and New Year's to National Pickle Week and National Scoop-the-Poop Week.

"They'll just need to fill out the forms and send it to us. We run a lot of (events) created by public relation agencies for the purpose of recognition, and the underwear industry certainly deserves recognition," Keil said drolly, her tongue partially in cheek but her underwear not showing.

Evans said his company has tried to enlist various politicians, including New York Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles Schumer, in the cause of instituting National Underwear Day, but to no avail. But he was able to compile numerous quirky underwear facts to whet the general public's appetite for skivvy-exposure.

For example, did you know the first modern bra was invented by New York socialite Mary Phelps Jacob in 1913? She tied two handkerchiefs with ribbon and cord and — voila — the precursor of the Wonderbra was born.

It seems crucial to know that the first functional "vent" was applied to boxers and briefs in 1934. (Prompting the question: What did men do before that?)

And here's some winning cocktail-party trivia: It would take nearly 7.5 trillion pairs of size large men's briefs to cover the state of Texas.

Talk about a nightmare.

To sign an online petition for National Underwear Day, go to freshpair.com.

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