

## **HALF-STAFF DATES & FLAG RULES**

### **CUSTOMARY DATES TO FLY HALF-STAFF**

- Peace Officers Memorial Day, May 15<sup>th</sup>, unless that day is also Armed Forces Day. (sunrise to sunset)
- Memorial Day, last Monday in May (sunrise to noon)
- Patriot Day, September 11<sup>th</sup> (sunrise to sunset)
- National Firefighters Memorial Day, October (typically a Sunday during Fire Prevention Week, which is around Oct.9<sup>th</sup> and along with a memorial service held in Emmitsburg, MD)
- Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, December 7<sup>th</sup> (sunrise to sunset)

### **OTHER SPECIAL FLAG-FLYING DAYS**

- President's Day, third Monday in February; celebration that takes place between Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays. It is not a half-staff day.
- Flag Day, June 14. It commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States, which was by resolution of the Second Continental Congress in 1777.
- Veteran's Day (formerly known as Armistice Day), November 11<sup>th</sup>: This is a day to honor our nation's veterans. It is not a day of mourning, but a day of celebrations and honor. Therefore, it is not a day of half-staff. Citizens are encouraged to fly POW/MIA flags and flags of the military branches on this day to show support of our Veterans.
- National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day, July 27 of each year: This day marks the anniversary of the signing of a treaty that

ended the Korean War. From 2000 until 2003 (during 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary years) this was a half-staff day. Each year since the proclamation only acts to “encourage the display of the flag”. This is a day for special remembrance of veterans of the Korean War, and especially the United States and allied combatants who made the ultimate sacrifice in Korea.

## **HOW TO FLY YOUR FLAG AT HALF-STAFF**

- Most half-staff days suggest that the American flag is at half-staff until sunset on the days of the order. Memorial Day is the exception where the American flag is at half-staff from sunrise until noon.
- When raising the American flag to half-staff on a vertical pole, always raise it briskly to the top of the flagpole for a moment before lowering it. When taking it down for the night, raise it to the top of the flagpole again and lower it to the bottom.
- With a telescoping pole it is acceptable to put the American flag on the second set of rings instead of the top set. In this case the top set would be left empty.
- When the American flag is flown at half-staff, state and other flags should be removed or flown at half-staff too.

## **IF YOUR FLAG CAN'T FLY AT HALF-STAFF**

- For flags that can't be lowered, such as those on many homes, it has been suggested that attaching a black ribbon or streamer to the top of the flag is an acceptable alternative. The ribbon should be the same width as a stripe on the flag and the same length as the flag.

- For a wall-mounted flag, three black mourning bows should be attached to the top edge of the flag, one at each corner and one in the center.

### **WHO CAN ORDER A HALF-STAFFING?**

- Only the President and state governors can decide when and how long the American flag should be flown at half-staff.

### **HOW LONG SHOULD THE FLAG BE AT HALF-STAFF?**

- Thirty days after the death of a President or former President.
- Ten days after the death of a Vice President, the Chief Justice or a retired Chief Justice, or the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- Until the burial of an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, secretary of a military department, a former Vice President, or the governor of a state, territory, or possession.
- On the day of, and the day after, the death of a Member of Congress.
- On Memorial Day, the day set aside to honor all the people who have died while serving the United States. Originally called Decoration Day, the flag is flown at half-staff until noon, then raised to full staff until sundown.

### **WHAT ABOUT HALF-STAFF TO HONOR OTHER CITIZENS?**

- Only the President of the United States or the governor of the state may order the flag at half-staff to honor the death of a national or state figure. In addition to the traditional half-staff salutes, the United States Flag Code mentions the use of our flag for honoring leading citizens such as Martin Luther King.

- There are occasions when the flag will be lowered for significant figures whom are not U.S. citizens. Examples include: Nelson Mandela in 2013, Pope John Paul II in 2005, King Hussein of Jordan in 1999, Israeli Prime Minister Ytzhak Rabin in 1995, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1965, United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold in 1961.
- Private citizens and non-government buildings may choose to fly their flags at half-staff to honor more local leaders. The Flag Code does not exclude any citizen, whether belonging to an organizations or not, whether they are recognized very locally or regionally. Examples of deceased citizens who might be honored with by lowering the flag to half-staff include local religious leader, youth leaders, honored teachers or sports coaches, local politicians, or a local hero. There need be no authorization from the government for the private sector (non-government) to use the Flag to honor any citizen.
- It is important to note that the Flag Code is a code, it is intended to provide guidance and is not obligatory. It carries no civil or criminal penalties for “misuse” of the Flag. Individuals are not acting illegally when using the flag according to their own rules. The Flag Code is only required to be followed on public or government buildings.

## **FLAG CODE MODIFICATIONJS FOR HALF-STAFF AT A FEDERAL FACILITY**

Federal facilities must follow the state’s lead for half-staff proclamations.

The Flag Code half-staffing requirements was modified with new legislation signed into effect on June 29, 2007 by President George Bush. The new legislation requires any federal facility within a region that proclaims half-staffing to honor a member of the U.S. Armed Forces who died during active duty must follow the half-staffing proclamation, the U.S. military fort must follow the proclamation. This applies to all governors of a state, possession or territory, or the Mayor of the District of Columbia. The text as adopted is shown below.

ISSUANCE OF PROCLAMATION.—Subsection (m) of section 7 of title 4, United States Code, is amended in the sixth sentence—

1. by inserting “or the death of a member of the Armed Forces from any state, territory, or possession who dies while serving on active duty” after “present or former official of the government of any state, territory, or possession of the United States”; and
2. by inserting before the period the following: “, and the same authority is provided to the Mayor of the District of Columbia with respect to present or former officials of the District of Columbia and members of the Armed Forces from the District of Columbia.”

FEDERAL FACILITY CONSISTENCY WITH PROCLAMATION.—Such subsection is further amended by inserting after the sixth sentence the following new sentence: “When the Governor of a State, territory, or possession, or the Mayor of the District of Columbia, issues a proclamation under the preceding sentence that the National flag be flown at half-staff in that State, territory, or possession or in the District of Columbia is because of the death of a member of the Armed Forces, the National flag flown at any Federal

installation or facility in the area covered by the proclamation shall be flown at half-staff consistent with that proclamation.

**HOW SHOULD THE AMERICAN FLAG BE DISPLAYED FROM A STAFF WHEN ON A PLATFORM OR ON THE FLOOR IN A CHURCH OR AUDITORIUM?**

The American flag presentation set should always be placed to the right of the speaker (viewer's left) without regard to a platform or the speaker or to the right of the audience.

**WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE GOLD FRINGE ON SOME FLAGS?**

The addition of the fringe started in the early 1800's as decorative enrichment. There are no rules that prohibit the use of fringe on an American flag by non-governmental groups or organizations.

**WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WITH A WORN OR TORN U.S. FLAG?**

Such a flag should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning. Individuals should be responsible for destroying the worn flag and burying the ashes. Most VFW or American Legion posts are happy to help with this service.

**IF TWO FLAGS ARE STAFFED BEFORE THE ENTRANCE OF A BUILDING, WHERE SHOULD THE AMERICAN FLAG BE?**

On the left side as observed from the street.

(this information was acquired from the Gettysburg Flag Works)