



Flag Honors Policy

This document describes the process by which Flag Worx[®] determines when and over which jurisdiction(s) to render flag honors¹ utilizing the SmartFlag[®] service.

Detection and Qualification

Notification

The initial alert regarding a half-staff event may come via several channels. Flag Worx[®] monitors a number of notification services whose purpose is to promulgate flag honors. Some of these are direct sources (e.g. an e-mail from a state governor's office), while others are ostensibly passing along notice of the event, having received it from some other source (e.g. a press release or other notification). Finally, Flag Worx may learn of a call for half-staff via a news report.

Flag Code Events

While the President and governors have some latitude in calling for flag honors within their respective jurisdictions, there are certain events which are specified within the U.S. Flag Code² directly. Among these are deaths of prominent office-holders (e.g. President, Supreme Court justices, members of Congress), and several annual observances (e.g. Memorial Day, Patriot Day, National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day). Some states have also codified in state law certain annual observances. If one of these events occurs, and press coverage or official announcements confirm their occurrence, then Flag Worx may move ahead with a half-staff observance *prior to* the official issuance of a half-staff announcement. Many of these events are one- or two-day events, and there are sometimes significant delays in official announcements. Where the Flag Code is clear, we will proceed with lowering flags as appropriate. If the Flag Code does not explicitly identify an office holder or annual event, we will defer until official announcement is made and confirmed.

Qualification

Once alerted, Flag Worx seeks to verify that the call for flag honors is authentic, that it was issued under proper authority, and that the parameters of the call are clearly defined. Specifically, we seek to ascertain who (what office) directed flags to half-staff, the scope of application (usually geographic), which flags are affected (US and/or state), the honoree(s), and the time at which flags should be lowered and raised³. If either date is unknown, it will be represented as "TBD", and updated when it has been determined. If the start date is TBD, flags

¹ Flag honors are ordinarily rendered by the lowering of flags to half-staff. Although there are other means for rendering flag honors (notably, the use of a mourning ribbon on fixed flags), at the time of this writing, positioning the flag at half-staff is the only means implemented by the SmartFlag[®] service.

² 4 USC § 7 - Title 4 United States Code, chapter 1, section 7 — for half-staffs: paragraph (m).

³ It is common for the exact ending date for flag honors to be unknown at the time of their declaration. Many authorities specify "until date of interment" at a time when that date has not been established. Less common, though not unheard of, is for the start date to be undetermined at the declaration.



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will not be moved until it is determined. If the ending date is TBD, flags will be placed at half-staff in the applicable jurisdiction(s) as soon as practical after the starting date/time and will remain there until the ending date is clarified. They will be returned to full staff as soon as possible following the ending date/time.

Scope of Application

Sub-state Events

While the President and the governors of the states and territories are the only offices with direct authority via the Flag Code, it is not uncommon for governors to authorize half-staff observances for more narrow jurisdictions (typically, but not exclusively, municipalities) within their state. While there is some controversy over whether these observances are appropriate, Flag Worx will make best efforts to facilitate them when designated gubernatorial authority is evident.

“Flags over the Capitol”

Occasionally, a Governor will call for flags to be lowered at the State Capitol, giving citizens and other governmental agencies discretion as to whether or not to lower their flags along with the flag(s) at the capitol. Absent specific guidance to the contrary, Flag Worx will follow these flag movements as though the Governor had been explicit in calling for all flags to be lowered. An example of contrary guidance would be the identification of certain sub-state jurisdictions (e.g. counties, states, or agencies) to which the call *does* apply.

State Flag Only Events

In the context of their respective jurisdictions, governors may also be empowered to call for flag honors involving only the flag of their state, commonwealth, or territory/possession. Flag Worx monitors for these announcements and makes best efforts to comply with these calls in a timely way. The U.S. flag will take precedence over state flag positioning, though, and in no case will Flag Worx knowingly position any flag at a higher level than the U.S. flag⁴.

Related Flags

Whenever the U.S. flag is placed at half-staff, all other SmartFlag[®] managed flags within the specified jurisdiction will also be placed at half-staff⁴. If only state flags are directed to half-staff, then only the flag of the specified state will be moved to half-staff, even if the flags of other states, municipalities, or private/corporate flags are displayed in the same flag display. Flag Worx[®] does not presently support the issuance of half-staff orders for any flags other than those

⁴ 4 USC § 7 (c)



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of the United States, one of its states, possessions or territories or sovereign Native American nations⁵.

Appropriate Use of Flag Honors

As described above, Flag Worx responds to calls for flag honors when issued by proper authorities and/or when explicitly called for in the Flag Code or other applicable laws declaring such events. Flag Worx does not evaluate the nature of the person or event being honored, the appropriateness of flag honors, nor the duration or timing of the event.

Hoisting to the Peak

Paragraph (m) of the flag code specifies that, before being lowered to half-staff, the flag should be hoisted to the peak “for an instant”, and that it should be returned to the peak of the pole before being lowered for a day. Because the SmartFlag[®] service is intended for poles on which the flag is displayed continuously (not raised and lowered each day), this provision does not normally apply. If a client assumes manual control of the flag (e.g. to install a new flag) while it is at half-staff, it will be the client’s responsibility to observe this practice by directing the flag to the peak before and after the new flag is installed. Once manual control is terminated, the unit will return the flag to its proper position.

⁵ To date, we have observed half-staff events called for by leadership of the Osage and Navajo nations.