

Flying the Flag at Half-Staff

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According to Section 7(m) of the United States Flag Code, the United States flag should be flown at half-staff on the following occasions.

- **Memorial Day.** The flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon only, then raised to the top of the staff.

“Memorial Day, which is observed on the last Monday of May, commemorates the men and women who died while in the military service. In observance of the holiday, many people visit cemeteries and memorials, and volunteers often place American flags on each grave site at national cemeteries. A national moment of remembrance takes place at 3:00 p.m. local time.” [Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. <http://www.va.gov/opa/speceven/memday/>. Accessed October 24, 2014.]

- **Death of a Principal Government Figure. ***
 - Principal figures of the United States Government (by order of the President)
 - The Governor of a State, territory, or possession (by order of the President)
 - Other officials or foreign dignitaries (by order of the President)
 - Present or former official of the government of any State, territory, or possession (by order of that State’s Governor)
 - Member of the Armed Forces from any State, territory, or possession who dies while serving on active duty (by order of that State’s Governor)
 - Present or former officials of the District of Columbia (by order of the Mayor of the District of Columbia)
 - Members of the Armed Forces from the District of Columbia (by order of the Mayor of the District of Columbia)

- **Peace Officers Memorial Day** (unless that day is also Armed Forces Day).

“In 1962, President John F. Kennedy signed a proclamation which designated May 15th as Peace Officers Memorial Day and the week in which that date falls as *Police Week*.”

[Source: Fraternal Order of Police National Memorial Committee.

<http://www.policeweek.org/>. Accessed October 24, 2014.]

“Armed Forces Day is celebrated annually on the third Saturday of May.” [Source: U.S. Department of Defense. <http://www.defense.gov/afd/history.aspx>. Accessed October 24, 2014.]

In addition, the United States flag should be flown at half-staff on the following occasions.

- **Patriot Day (September 11).**

On December 18, 2001, Congress approved Public Law 107-89, “Amending title 36, United States Code, to designate September 11 as Patriot Day.” The law requests the President to issue a proclamation each year calling for flags to be flown at half-staff on Patriot Day, “in honor of the individuals who lost their lives as a result of the terrorist attacks against the United States that occurred on September 11, 2001.” [Source: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ89/pdf/PLAW-107publ89.pdf>. Accessed October 24, 2014.]

- **National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service (in October).**

On October 16, 2001, Congress approved Public Law 107-51, “Memorializing fallen firefighters by lowering the American flag to half-staff in honor of the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service in Emmitsburg, Maryland.” [Source: U.S. Government Printing Office. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ51/pdf/PLAW-107publ51.pdf>. Accessed October 24, 2014.]

The National Fallen Firefighters Memorial is sponsored each year by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. “At the beginning of National Fire Prevention Week in October, the Foundation sponsors the official national tribute to career and volunteer firefighters who died in the line of duty during the previous year.” [Source: National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

https://www.facebook.com/NationalFallenFirefightersFoundation/info?ref=page_internal. Accessed October 24, 2014.]

“Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire, the tragic 1871 conflagration that killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres. The fire began on October 8, but continued into and did most of its damage on October 9, 1871.” “Since 1922, Fire Prevention Week has been observed on the Sunday through Saturday period in which October 9 falls.” [Source: National Fire Protection Association. <http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information/fire-prevention-week/about-fire-prevention-week>. Accessed October 24, 2014.]

- **National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (December 7).**

On August 23, 1994, Congress approved Public Law 103-308, “Designating December 7 of each year as ‘National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day’.” The law requests the President to issue a proclamation each year calling for flags to be flown at half-staff on December 7, “in honor of the individuals who died as a result of their service at Pearl Harbor.”

* Section 7(m) of the United States Flag Code prescribes the following durations for the flag to be flown at half-staff upon the death of a principal government figure.

- 30 days from the death of the President or a former President
- 10 days from the day of death of the Vice President, the Chief Justice or a retired Chief Justice of the United States, or the Speaker of the House of Representatives
- from the day of death until interment of an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, a Secretary of an executive or military department, a former Vice President, or the Governor of a State, territory, or possession
- on the day of death and the following day for a Member of Congress