

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)  
as they pertain to**

**Departmental Regulation DR5160-006  
Display and Use of the Flag**

[What does half-staff or half-mast mean?](#)

[When should flags be flown at half-staff?](#)

[Can we leave the flag up all night?](#)

[Who is responsible for raising and lowering \(if required\) the flag each day at my building?](#)

[What if there is no one around to raise and lower the flag?](#)

[Does the flag have to be flown on weekends and holidays when my building is closed?](#)

[Where can I get more information on flag etiquette or just general information about the flag?](#)

**Q. What does half-staff or half-mast mean?**

A. The term "half-staff" is commonly used to refer to half-mast, although military tradition indicates that "half-mast" is generally reserved to usage aboard a ship, where flags are typically flown from masts. The US Flag Code Title 4, Chapter 1, Sec. 7. "Position and manner of display" consistently uses the phrase "half-staff" throughout subsection (m) including "(m)(1) the term "half-staff" means the position of the flag when it is one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff;".

**Q. When should flags be flown at half-staff?**

A. Flags should be flown at half-staff on Memorial Day; when directed by an Agency head; by proclamation of a State Governor for the state, territory or possession under their authority; by order of the President; death of the President, Vice President, Chief Justice or retired Chief Justice of the United States, the Speaker of the House or Representatives; an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, a Secretary of an executive or military department, a former President, former Vice President, the Governor of a State, territory, or possession, or a Member of Congress. The President may also issue each year a proclamation directing United States government officials to display the flag of the United States at half-staff on the following days: Peace Officers Memorial Day, May 15 unless that day is also Armed Forces Day; Memorial Day (half-staff until noon only, then raised to the top of the staff), last Monday in May; and National Pearl Harbor Day, December 7.

**Q. Can we leave the flag up all night?**

A. The Flag Code states it is the universal custom to display the flag only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flag staffs in the open. However, when a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed 24 hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness. The American Legion interprets “proper illumination” as a light specifically placed to illuminate the flag (preferred) or having a light source sufficient to illuminate the flag so it is recognizable as such by the casual observer. Illuminated flags are not raised and lowered each day; however, they must be appropriately half-staffed on the required days.

**Q. Who is responsible for raising and lowering (if required) the flag each day at my building?**

A. If you are located in an Agency owned facility, check with whoever has facility management responsibilities for your location. If you are located in an Agency leased facility, check with your lease contracting officer to see what requirements for flying the flag, if any, were included in the lease. If you are in a GSA leased facility, check with your GSA representative to see what requirements for flying the flag, if any, and were included in the lease. If you are in GSA controlled space, GSA is responsible for flying the flag.

**Q. What if there is no one around to raise and lower the flag?**

A. Agency procedures should address responsibilities for both duty and non-duty hours. If your area is responsible for raising and lowering the flag each day, and no one will be around to do it properly, the flag should not be flown that day. The flag should not be left up all night (from the previous day) in order to ensure that it is flying on a day that no one is available to raise and lower it.

**Q. Does the flag have to be flown on weekends and holidays when my building is closed?**

- A. See the question on 'Who is responsible for raising the flag and lowering the flag each day at my building' first, to determine if weekends and holidays are covered. Flags should not be left flying overnight because no one will be available to raise or lower it on the weekend or holiday, unless it is properly illuminated. The flag should be flown on all working days and some special days like Memorial Day, but if you are not able to fly the flag correctly, than it should not be flown.

**Q. Where can I get more information on flag etiquette or just general information about the flag?**

- A. The following websites are just some of the places you can go to for more information on flag etiquette and general information about the flag:

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/document/departmental-regulation-5160-006>

<http://legion.org/flag/faq>

[http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/GSA\\_Flag\\_Policy\\_122107\\_w013108.pdf](http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/GSA_Flag_Policy_122107_w013108.pdf)

<http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title4&saved=%7CKHRpdGxIOjQgc2VjdGlvbjoxIGVkaXRpb246cHJlbGltKSBPUiAoZ3JhbnVsZWlkOjVtQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGU0LXNlY3Rpb24xKQ%3D%3D%7CdHJlZXNvcnQ%3D%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim&edition=prelim>

<http://www.usa-flag-site.org/etiquette.shtml>