

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	NOAA Administrative Order NAO 201-6A	
NOAA ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER SERIES	DATE OF ISSUANCE March 15, 2015	EFFECTIVE DATE April 1, 2015
SUBJECT Official Flags of NOAA		

### **SECTION 1. PURPOSE.**

.01 This Order describes the types and uses of official flags and pennants of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and indicates the authorized national, Department of Commerce (DOC), and NOAA service flags and ship's pennants for use at official ceremonies and occasions. Additionally, this Order specifies and describes those occasions when the rendering of honors is customary or appropriate, and prescribes procedures for displaying or flying flags in certain ceremonies established by usage and custom for social and interagency official contacts.

### **SECTION 2. SCOPE.**

.01 In addition to the flag of the United States, only those flags that are authorized by Department Administrative Order (DAO) 201-6, Official Flags of the Department, and whose procedures for displaying or flying are covered in this Order, are authorized for use by the organizations and officials of NOAA.

.02 Attachment 1 illustrates the authorized flags of the DOC, NOAA, and the NOAA Commissioned Corps.

.03 Attachment 2 illustrates flagstaff ornaments.

.04 Attachment 3 illustrates flag sizes.

### **SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.**

.01 Many countries have variations to their national flag that have been authorized for specific use. National flags most generally encountered are those designated to be flown by men-of-war and merchant ships.

- a. National Flag – The flag flown to represent a national government.
- b. Ensign - The flag designated by a country to be flown by its men-of-war.
- c. Union Jack – A flag depicting only the rectangular blue portion of the U.S. National Flag containing the stars.

- d. Commission Pennant- A long tapering flag, flown at the main mast of a government ship which is in commission but not under the command of an officer entitled to a personal flag or pennant.
- e. Distinctive Marks – The distinctive marks of a NOAA ship in commission are the NOAA service flag and either the commission pennant or the personal flag of a NOAA or DOC official.

.02 The words "flags", "ensign", "color", and "standard" preceded by the word "national" are used interchangeably and all mean the emblem to represent the national government.

.03 The words “half-staff” and “half-mast” are used interchangeably.

#### **SECTION 4. POLICY.**

.01 Flag of the United States.

- a. NOAA officials authorized to display, in their respective offices, the flag of the United States procured at public expense.
- b. The NOAA Administrator may authorize the procurement of the U.S. National Flag for display in the offices of key NOAA officials including those who serve in geographic locations separate from headquarters as the principal representatives of NOAA.
- c. The NOAA Administrator or persons designated by him/her may authorize the procurement of U.S. National Flags for display where official events take place, such as oath taking or public hearings, which make the presence of the flag particularly appropriate, and for display in public places in keeping with the honor and respect due the national colors.

.02 Personal Flags. The following officials of NOAA are authorized, through DAO 201-6, to display or fly personal flags:

- a. NOAA Administrator;
- b. NOAA Deputy Administrator;
- c. NOAA Chief Scientist;
- d. Flag Officers, NOAA Commissioned Corps;
- e. DOC Officials. Flags shall be appropriately displayed or flown by NOAA for the Secretary of Commerce, Deputy Secretary, Under Secretaries, General Counsel, Assistant Secretaries, and others.

.03 NOAA Flags.

- a. NOAA Service Flag. This flag is displayed or flown at all NOAA installations where proper arrangements exist, and aboard NOAA ships.

- b. Commission Pennant, NOAA Ships. This pennant is flown by NOAA ships or craft in commission.
- c. NOAA Commissioned Corps. The flag is displayed in accordance with the customs and traditions of the flags of Uniformed Services.
- d. NOAA officials authorized to display, in their respective offices, the flag of the United States procured at public expense are identified in Section 4.1 of this Order.
- e. The NOAA Administrator may authorize the procurement of U.S. flags for display in the offices of key NOAA officials, including those who serve in geographic locations separate from headquarters as the principal representatives of NOAA.

.04 Distinctive Marks. The distinctive marks of a NOAA ship in commission are the NOAA service flag and either the commission pennant or the personal flag of a NOAA or DOC official. Not more than one distinctive mark other than the service flag shall be flown simultaneously. The distinctive marks shall be flown day and night, except on occasions of ceremony described elsewhere within Section 4 of this Order. The commission pennant or personal flag shall be hauled down when a personal flag is displayed so as to not fly more than two distinctive marks simultaneously. The commission pennant or personal flag shall be flown from a short standard hoisted to the main truck, and the service flag shall be flown from the fore truck on ships having two masts. On ships having one mast, the commission pennant or personal flag and service flag shall be flown at the same masthead with the personal flag or commission pennant uppermost. During periods when a ship is dressed or full dressed, these flags and pennants shall be flown as described under Section 4.06 of this Order.

- a. Underway. All vessels, when underway, shall fly the National Ensign. When not underway, all vessels shall fly the ensign at the gaff from 0800 to sunset except when at sea when no land or vessel is in sight. Unless there are sufficient reasons to the contrary, the colors shall be set even though it is before 0800 or after sunset if there is sufficient light for them to be seen: when getting underway or coming to anchor when entering or leaving port; when passing, meeting, joining, or parting from other government vessels; when falling in with a vessel at sea; when required to establish identity by patrol aircraft; and when approaching or passing towns, forts, naval stations, lighthouses, and light vessels. If a NOAA ship enters a port other than the home port or usual operating port during the night, colors shall be made at daylight for a short period to enable the authorities of the port and government vessels present to determine her nationality. When arriving in port after daylight but before 0800 and after keeping the colors up long enough for the port authorities to recognize them, they shall be hauled down and made again at 0800 in the usual manner.
- b. In Port. When in port whether at anchor or alongside, the National Ensign and the Union Jack shall be hoisted at 0800 and hauled down at sunset. The Union Jack shall be flown from the jack staff from Morning to Evening Colors. At Morning Colors, the Union Jack shall be hoisted after the National Ensign has been hoisted and set. At Evening Colors, this procedure shall be reversed.
- c. In the case of a commonwealth, dominion or similar government, recognized as independent by the US Government, which has a national flag, as a matter of courtesy in the rendering of honors, and at the discretion of the senior officer present, while at anchor

or moored alongside in foreign ports, ships may hoist the foreign ensign of the commonwealth, dominion or similar government, recognized as independent along the outboard yardarm of the main mast, or an alternate yard arm as is permitted by practicality as long as it is not above the National Ensign while on the main mast. The host nation's flag will be raised and lowered in turn at 0800 and at sunset accordingly and at no time will it be the sole national flag raised aboard a commissioned vessel.

- d. Boat Flag. The National Ensign will be used as a boat flag by all commissioned officers.
- e. Official DOC Personnel On Board a NOAA Vessel.
  - i. When a DOC official for whom a flag is authorized is on board a vessel belonging to DOC, the official's flag shall be flown. When two or more such officials visit a vessel at the same time, only the flag of the higher ranking official shall be flown. When the flag of a secretarial officer is hoisted on a vessel, it may be larger but shall not be smaller than the service flag flown. Personal flags of other officials when flown may be smaller but shall not be larger than the service flag flown.
  - ii. If on a ship with one mast, the personal flag of the ranking individual shall be hoisted to the truck the instant the official steps on deck and flown there until the individual leaves. If on a two-masted ship, it shall be hoisted to the main truck. If the official visit occurs during a ceremony requiring the National Ensign to be flown at those places, the personal flag shall be shifted to the starboard yardarm or the fore truck.

#### .05 Morning and Evening Colors.

- a. In port, the ceremonial hoisting or lowering of the National Ensign at 0800 and at sunset aboard a NOAA ship not underway shall be known as the Morning Colors and Evening Colors, respectively.
- b. The officer of the deck with the day's duty or the quartermaster on watch shall perform the ceremonial hoisting of Morning Colors and the lowering during Evening Colors at sunset.
- c. When in the presence of a Navy or Coast Guard vessel, Morning and Evening Color ceremonies shall be conducted in unison following the senior officer present afloat. If that is the NOAA ship, the senior officer may defer at their discretion. When they perform these ceremonies to music, the officer of the deck shall be governed thereby and dispense with oral or other signals.
- d. A boat underway within sight or hearing of a color ceremony shall lay to, or proceed at the slowest safe speed. The officer or coxswain in charge of the boat shall remain seated or standing and shall not salute.
- e. During periods of official mourning when the National Ensign is required to be flown at half-mast, it shall first be hoisted to the peak at Morning and Evening Colors before setting at half-mast or hauling down.

#### .06 Dressing and Full Dressing Ship.

- a. When a ship of the NOAA fleet is in port and the occasion calls for dressing ship, the largest National Ensign available on board shall be flown from the flagstaff aft. The Union Jack from the jack staff, and a National Ensign or other flag shall be flown from each masthead as described in the following.
  - i. On a ship with one mast, a National Ensign is flown at the truck, the NOAA service flag at the starboard yardarm, and a personal flag, if flown, at the starboard yardarm inboard.
  - ii. On a ship with two masts, the National Ensign is flown at the main truck, the NOAA service flag at the fore truck, and personal flags, if flown, at the starboard yardarm.
  - iii. On ships with a Commanding Officer (CO), if a personal flag is not flown, the NOAA commission pennant shall be flown at the main or fore truck above the National Ensign.
  - iv. The ensigns or flags flown at mastheads shall be the same size if masts are equal in height; otherwise, they shall conform to the difference in heights of the mastheads. The Union Jack shall be approximately equal in size to that of the union of the National Ensign at the flagstaff but not significantly larger than any other ensign flown.
- b. When in port and the occasion requires full dressing of the ship, in addition to the dressing of mastheads, a rainbow of signal flags, arranged no more than three (3) feet apart so as to give the most pleasing color distribution, shall be flown reaching from the foot of the jack staff to the mastheads, thence to the foot of the flagstaff. Every fourth flag in line should be a pennant. Ships without masts shall make a display as little modified from the rainbow effect as is practicable.
- c. When half-masting of the National Ensign is required on occasions of dressing or full dressing ship, only the ensign at the flagstaff and the Union Jack shall be half-masted.
- d. The following additional rules concerning dressing or full dressing ship in port shall be observed.
  - i. On President's Day and Independence Day, all NOAA ships in commission shall fully dress the ship at 0800 and remain so dressed until sunset. When weather or other circumstances render this inadvisable in the opinion of the CO, dressing may be substituted for full dressing.
  - ii. When President's Day and Independence Day occur during a period of mourning, the mourning shall be suspended and the ceremonies observed.
  - iii. On all other national holidays, ships may be dressed at the discretion of the CO if no other vessels are present. If other U.S. or foreign government ships in sight are dressed, the NOAA ship shall also be dressed.
  - iv. When holidays on which full dressing is required fall on Sunday, the ceremonies shall be postponed until the following day.

- v. Ships may participate in celebrating local holidays and festivals by dressing or fully dressing the ship and joining in other ceremonies, including ship parades, provided there is no interference with regular duties.

.07 Display of National Flag at Half-Staff.

- a. The Flag, when flown at half-staff, should first be hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-mast position. The flag should, upon lowering, be raised to the peak position for an instant, and then lowered to be secured for the day.
- b. When the National Ensign is half-masted, the Union Jack shall also be half-masted.
- c. It is NOAA policy that the National Flag be flown at half-staff on all NOAA buildings, grounds, and vessels (when in port):
  - i. On Memorial Day until noon, then raised to the top of the staff in accordance with Section 6.03.
  - ii. On Peace Officers Memorial Day, May 15 of each year, in accordance with section 36 U.S.C. § 136, Section 6.04, unless that day is also Armed Forces Day pursuant to Section 6.03.
  - iii. On Patriot Day, September 11 of each year, in accordance with section 144 of Section 6.04.
  - iv. On National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, December 7 of each year, in accordance with section 129 of Section 6.04.
  - v. Each year in honor of the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service in accordance with Public Law 107-51 (Section 6.05). This date is usually the first Sunday in October and is announced annually by Presidential proclamation.
  - vi. When so directed by the President or the Secretary of Commerce.
  - vii. On NOAA buildings, grounds, and vessels in the area covered by a proclamation issued by the governor of any State, territory, or U.S. possession or the Mayor of the District of Columbia that the national flag be flown at half-staff in that State, territory, or U.S. possession or in the District of Columbia because of the death of a member of the Military Services from that State, territory, or U.S. possession or from the District of Columbia who died while serving on active duty.
  - viii. Outside the United States on NOAA buildings, grounds, and vessels worldwide, the national flag is flown at half-staff when required, allowing for another nation's flag flown full-staff next to the national flag of the United States.

.08 Official Mourning.

- a. Upon the death of a United States civil official, the National Ensign shall be half-masted from the day of death for the periods indicated below as directed by the President of the United States and in accordance with Presidential Proclamation 3044 and 3958:

- i. The President or a former President: for thirty days from the day of death.
  - ii. The Vice President, the Chief Justice or a retired Chief Justice of the United States, or the Speaker of the House of Representatives: for ten days from the day of death.
  - iii. An Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, a member of the Cabinet, a former Vice President, the President pro tempore of the Senate, the Majority Leader of Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, or the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives: from the day of death until interment.
  - iv. The flag of the United States shall be flown at half-staff on all NOAA buildings, grounds, and vessels of the Federal Government in a State, Territory, or possession of the United States upon the death of the Governor of such State, Territory, or possession from the day of death until interment.
  - v. In the event of the death of other officials, former officials, or foreign dignitaries, the flag of the United States shall be displayed at half-staff in accordance with such orders or instructions as may be issued by or at the direction of the President, or in accordance with recognized customs or practices not inconsistent with law.
  - vi. The Secretary of Commerce may direct that the flag of the United States be flown at half-staff on buildings, grounds, or vessels under their jurisdiction on occasions other than those specified herein which they consider proper, and that suitable military honors are rendered as appropriate.
- b. When an officer or employee of a NOAA ship dies, the following will be observed:
- i. A National Ensign should be furnished to be used for draping a casket whenever requested; and
  - ii. During burial at sea, the National Ensign shall be half-masted during daylight hours from 0800 until the body has been committed to the deep.

.09 Flag Sizes. The flag sizes listed in Attachment 3 to this Order are to be used for display or flying in accordance with the outlined requirements.

.10 Flagstaff Ornaments (Office and Vehicle Display). In displaying or flying either the National Ensign or personal flags as authorized, the following flagstaff ornaments (gold color) relative to rank/position shall be used. For sketches of flagstaff ornaments see Attachment 2 to this Order.

- a. Members of the Cabinet and above - a spread eagle including the National Ensign.
- b. Commerce Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries down through Rear Admirals (Lower Half), and Senior Executive Service - a halberd.
- c. Captains and GS-15s - a ball.

- d. The staff used for the NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation (OMAO) Service or NOAA Commissioned Corps flag shall be topped by a battle ax when displayed at an OMAO facility or in honor of a NOAA Corps officer, and may be topped by a plain round spear at all other times or in NOAA civilian facilities. These ornaments shall be used regardless of the rank of the official or officer displaying the flag.
- e. The staff used for automobile flags shall be topped by an acorn regardless of the rank of the official or officer embarked.

## **SECTION 5. RESPONSIBILITIES.**

.01 NOAA Administrator. Prescribes the display and use of NOAA flags and the display of Official DOC flags aboard ship in a manner consistent with provisions of DAO 201-6.

.02 Director, NOAA Corps and OMAO. Enforces the proper display of flags aboard NOAA commissioned ships, as prescribed by NOAA Administrator in this Order and consistent with the provisions of DAO 201-6.

.03 Ship Commanding Officer. Determines the suitability of certain flag displays (such as full dressing) during specific weather or operational circumstances.

## **SECTION 6. REFERENCES.**

.01 Department Administrative Order (DAO) 201-6, Official Flags of the Department.  
[http://www.osec.doc.gov/opog/dmp/daos/dao201\\_6.html](http://www.osec.doc.gov/opog/dmp/daos/dao201_6.html)

.02 4 U.S.C. § 1 – 10. Flag And Seal, Seat Of Government, And The States.

.03 4 U.S.C. § 7 (Position and manner of display).

.04 36 U.S.C. § 101-2502 (Patriotic and National Observances and Ceremonies).

.05 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,” October 16, 2001. 36 U.S.C. § 151302, note.

.06 Presidential Proclamation 3044, “Display of the Flag of the United States of America at Half-Staff Upon the Death of Certain Officials and Former Officials,” March 1, 1954. 19 Fed. Reg. 1235 (1954).

.07 Presidential Proclamation 3948, “Amending Proclamation No. 3044 With Respect to Display of the Flag of the United States of America at Half-Staff Upon the Death of Certain Officials and Former Officials,” December 12, 1969.



**SECTION 7. EFFECT ON OTHER ISSUANCES.**

.01 This Order supersedes NOAA Administrative Order 201-6, dated April 18, 2002.

.02 The NOAA Under Secretary signs because there is no delegation of authority for this NAO.

An electronic copy of this Order will be posted in place of the superseded Order on the NOAA Office of the Chief Administrative Officer website under the NOAA Administrative Issuances Section. <http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ocao/index.html>

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'K. O. S.', is written over a horizontal line.

Under Secretary of Commerce  
for Oceans and Atmosphere

Offices of Primary Interest:  
Office of Marine and Aviation Operations

Attachments:  
Attachment 1 –Authorized Flags of the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and the NOAA  
Commissioned Corps.  
Attachment 2 – Pictures of Flagstaff Ornaments.  
Attachment 3 – Flag Sizes.