



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

RIVMC Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery

OFFICE OF VETERANS SERVICES

RIVMC Policy #4 Dated May 15, 2023

Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery Flag Etiquette

1. **PURPOSE:** To provide guidance on the proper etiquette and protocol for the handling, display, and disposal of the United States flag.
2. **AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL:** For the purpose of this policy, the Director of the Rhode Island Office of Veterans Services (RIVETS) and the Administrator of the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery (RIVMC) are the "designated person in-charge" unless otherwise stated. The Director and Administrator may delegate responsibilities as necessary to ensure the policy standards are consistently maintained.
3. **GOVERNING LAWS:** 4 U.S.C. § 1, known as the Federal Flag Code, contains rules for handling and displaying the U.S. flag.
4. **RESPONSIBILITIES:** All employees of RIVMC will be trained on the procedures set forth below. Failure to comply may be deemed just cause for disciplinary action.
5. **FEDERAL FLAG CODE:** Position and Manner of Display (4 U.S.C. § 7] The flag, when carried in a procession with another flag or flags, should be either on the marching right; that is, the flag's own right, or, if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.
 - (a) The flag should not be displayed on a float in a parade except from a staff, or as provided in subsection (i) of this section.
 - (b) The flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle or of a railroad train or a boat. When the flag is displayed on a motorcar, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.
 - (c) No other flag or pennant should be placed above or, if on the same level, to the right of the flag of the United States of America, except during church services conducted by naval chaplains at sea, when the church pennant may be flown above the flag during church services for the personnel of the Navy. No person shall display the flag of the United Nations or any other national or international flag equal, above, or in a position of superior prominence or honor to, or in place of, the flag of the United States at any place within the United States or any Territory or possession thereof: *Provided*, That nothing in this section shall make unlawful the continuance of the practice heretofore followed of displaying the flag of the United Nations in a position of superior prominence or honor, and other national flags in positions of equal prominence or honor, with that of the flag of the United States at the headquarters of the United Nations.

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- (d) The flag of the United States of America, when it is displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staffs, should be on the right, the flag's own right, and its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag.
- (e) The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of States or localities or pennants of societies are grouped and displayed from staffs.
- (f) When flags of States, cities, or localities, or pennants of societies are flown on the same halyard with the flag of the United States, the latter should always be at the peak. When the flags are flown from adjacent staffs, the flag of the United States should be hoisted first and lowered last. No such flag or pennant may be placed above the flag of the United States or to the United States flag's right.
- (g) When flags of two or more nations are displayed, they are to be flown from separate staffs of the same height. The flags should be of approximately equal size. International usage forbids the display of the flag of one nation above that of another nation in time of peace.
- (h) When the flag of the United States is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally or at an angle from the window sill, balcony, or front of a building, the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half-staff. When the flag is suspended over a sidewalk from a rope extending from a house to a pole at the edge of the sidewalk, the flag should be hoisted out, union first, from the building.
- (i) When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union should be uppermost and to the flag's own right, that is, to the observer's left. When displayed in a window, the flag should be displayed in the same way, with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street.
- (j) When the flag is displayed over the middle of the street, it should be suspended vertically with the union to the north in an east and west street or to the east in a north and south street.
- (k) When used on a speaker's platform, the flag, if displayed flat, should be displayed above and behind the speaker. When displayed from a staff in a church or public auditorium, the flag of the United States of America should hold the position of superior prominence, in advance of the audience, and in the position of honor at the clergyman's or speaker's right as he faces the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergyman or speaker or to the right of the audience.
- (l) The flag should form a distinctive feature of the ceremony of unveiling a statue or monument, but it should never be used as the covering for the statue or monument.
- (m) The flag, when flown at half-staff, should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. On Memorial Day the flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon only, then raised to the top of the staff. By order of the President, the flag shall be flown at half-staff upon the death of principal figures of the United States Government and the Governor of a State, territory, or possession, as a mark of respect to their memory. In the event of the death of other officials or foreign dignitaries, the flag is to be displayed at half-staff according to Presidential instructions or orders, or in accordance with recognized customs or practices not inconsistent with law. In the event

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of the death of a present or former official of the government of any State, territory, or possession of the United States, the death of a member of the Armed Forces from any State, territory, or possession who dies while serving on active duty, or the death of a first responder working in any State, territory, or possession who dies while serving in the line of duty, the Governor of that State, territory, or possession may proclaim that the National flag shall be flown at half-staff, 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, members of the Armed Forces from the District of Columbia, and first responders working in the District of Columbia. When the Governor of a State, territory, or possession, or the Mayor of the District of Columbia,

(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;

(2) the term “executive or military department” means any agency listed under sections 101 and 102 of title 5;

(3) the term “Member of Congress” means a Senator, a Representative, a Delegate, or the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico; and

(4) the term “first responder” means a “public safety officer” as defined in section 1204 of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 ([34 U.S.C. 10284](#)).

(n) When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should be so placed that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

(o) When the flag is suspended across a corridor or lobby in a building with only one main entrance, it should be suspended vertically with the union of the flag to the observer’s left upon entering. If the building has more than one main entrance, the flag should be suspended vertically near the center of the corridor or lobby with the union to the north, when entrances are to the east and west or to the east when entrances are to the north and south. If there are entrances in more than two directions, the union should be to the east.

Respect for the Flag (4 U.S.C. § 8] No disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America; the flag should not be dipped to any person or thing. Regimental colors, State flags, and organization or institutional flags are to be dipped as a mark of honor.

(a) The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.

(b) The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor, water, or merchandise.

(c) The flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free.

(d) The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. It should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds, but always allowed to fall free.

Bunting of blue, white, and red, always arranged with the blue above, the white in the middle, and the red below, should be used for covering a speaker’s desk, draping the front of the platform, and for decoration in general.

(e) The flag should never be fastened, displayed, used, or stored in such a manner as to permit it to be easily torn, soiled, or damaged in any way.

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- (f) The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.
- (g) The flag should never have placed upon it, nor on any part of it, nor attached to it any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any nature.
- (h) The flag should never be used as a receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.
- (i) The flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs and the like, printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discard. Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff or halyard from which the flag is flown.
- (j) No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations. The flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing. Therefore, the lapel flag pin being a replica, should be worn on the left lapel near the heart.
- (k) The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.

6. FLAG DISTRIBUTION:

- a) Stick flags will be provided to veterans' organizations and other representatives to commemorate Memorial Day. These organizations will flag cemeteries throughout Rhode Island. Any updates to veterans' graves and the number of flags required will be given to the Administrator by the end of March each year per the standard form that is mailed at the beginning of February. Additional flags may be provided upon approval of the Administrator.
- b) Stick Flags will be handed out to the organizations the first week of May depending on availability and recorded in the log to ensure accountability.
- c) The details of Rhode Islands Flagging program will be maintained on the following website: [Welcome | Rhode Island Veterans Grave Flags \(ri.gov\)](http://Welcome|RhodeIslandVeteransGraveFlags(ri.gov))

7. FLAG DISPLAY THROUGHOUT THE CEMETERY:

- a) Flags are not permitted on individual grave markers. This is not only to uphold the appearance of the cemetery and the safety of the maintenance staff, but also to ensure all flags are able to be maintained and treated with respect.
- b) At the discretion of the Administrator, flags may be placed throughout the cemetery on Veteran's Day and Memorial Day, and when approved for other ceremonies.

8. FLAG INTAKE PROCEDURE: The RIVMC may receive flags from customers, veterans' organizations, or other individuals seeking proper retirement. RIVMC will accept the flags when in accordance with the following requirements:

- a) Single flags must be folded. For all deliveries, the folded flags must be placed in clear plastic bags.
- b) Stick flags must be rolled and bound (rubber bands, string, etc.) in groups of twelve, or less.

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- c) Prior to accepting the flags, RIVMC administrative staff will complete the "Flag Retirement Form" (Enclosure 1). The form must be signed by the individual delivering the flags and the RIVMC employee accepting the delivery.
- d) Once the Form has been completed, large numbers of flags will be taken to the maintenance facility for placement in appropriate bins. Smaller deliveries will be held at the Administration Office until transferred by RIVMC maintenance personnel to the designated flag storage bins. When storage bins are full, they will be transferred to the storage Conex in the maintenance yard until they are retired.
- e) No flags will be stored at any other location.
- f) Proper retirement of the flags will be coordinated through the Administrator. Whenever possible, retirement of the flags will be done in coordination with the Bomb Disposal Unit.
- g) After the flags have been transferred to the designated flag storage area in the new maintenance building, the form will be filed in the Administration Office.
- h) The Administrator reserves the right to transport flags to a licensed incinerator facility in accordance with retirement protocol if required.

9. FLAG STORAGE:

- a) All flags awaiting proper retirement will be folded, bagged, and placed in a pallet bin within the new maintenance facility. The maintenance supervisor is responsible for flag accountability. When bins inside are filled, the bin will be transferred to the Conex until time for retirement.
- b) RIVMC staff will notate the FRD form when flags are transferred from the Administration Office to the new maintenance facility.

10. CONTACT: For questions concerning this policy letter, contact the Administrator at 401-268-3088.


James A. Bessel

Administrator, RIVMC

Enclosure: Flag Retirement Form



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
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FLAG RETIREMENT FORM

Flags delivered to RIVMC for retirement:

Folded Flags _____

Stick Flags _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

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For RIVMC Office Use Only

Received By: _____