




United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

OCT 12 2017

OWF POLICY MEMORANDUM 2018-003

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, National Park Service
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
Director, U.S. Geological Survey

From: Bryan Rice, Director – Office of Wildland Fire 

Subject: Display of Flags at Half-Staff at Department of the Interior Buildings and Facilities Following Federal Firefighter Line of Duty Death

Background

This Policy Memorandum provides direction regarding the observance of line of duty deaths in the Federal wildland fire community with the display of flags at half-staff for all owned or leased Department of the Interior buildings and facilities.

Federal wildland firefighting is interagency in nature and includes Department of the Interior (DOI), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), State, Tribal, and local partners. It is common for non-DOI personnel to be assigned to DOI wildfires, and DOI personnel to be assigned to non-DOI wildfires. Both the USFS and DOI recognize the merits of firefighter contributions across multiple jurisdictions and the entire Federal wildland firefighting community.

It is important that DOI and the USFS maintain consistency in response to firefighter fatalities. Regardless of a wildland firefighter's crew or home agency, we collectively recognize the sacrifice between the two Departments when a fatality occurs. Lowering flags to half-staff at all DOI owned or leased buildings and facilities demonstrates support and respect for the entire Federal wildland firefighting community.

Policy

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to direct that the U. S. flag be flown at half-staff on occasions other than those specified in Proclamation No. 3044, March 1, 1954, as amended by Proclamation No. 3948, December 12, 1969, at facilities operated by the Department. Proclamation No. 3044 sets forth provisions for the display of the U.S. flag at half-staff following the death of government officials and former officials, and allows that the flag may be flown at half-staff on other occasions as considered proper by department and agency heads. This practice is consistent with the Bureau of Land Management (Line-

of-Duty Death Response Guide) and the U.S. Forest Service (FSH 1309.19) agency guidance on response to firefighter line of duty death.

Consistent with Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) Policy Memo 2016-008 on Serious Wildland Fire Accident Notification Process, the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group is required to immediately notify the OWF Director or designee of any firefighter fatality. Upon notification of a fatality of a DOI Federal wildland firefighter, the OWF Director will prepare a Decision Memo from the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, for the Secretary of the Interior, requesting that the flags at all DOI owned or leased buildings and facilities be flown at half-staff. The Decision Memo shall include the following information:

- Name of the firefighter, the firefighter's home agency, and crew.
- Background on the incident, including the date of the death, the circumstances that led to death, and any other pertinent information.
- Date of any planned memorial service.
- Requested date range for flying the flags at half-staff.

This policy also applies to the death of non-DOI Federal wildland firefighters in cases where the employee's home Department has decided to fly the U.S. flag at half-staff. In support of the entire wildland firefighting community, every effort should be made to fly the flag at half-staff at all DOI owned or leased buildings and facilities upon the death of a non-DOI Federal wildland firefighter.

Attachment 1 includes the Decision Memo template.

It is DOI policy that the flags at all DOI buildings and facilities be flown at half-staff for a period to be determined by the Secretary of the Interior.

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact Craig Leff at (202) 606-3053 or craig_leff@ios.doi.gov.

Attachment: Decision Memo Template