

THE FLYING OF FLAGS ON GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS

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1. The Ministry of Public Building and Works is responsible for the flying of flags on the buildings of civil Departments of the Government, though the actual hoisting and lowering of flags will be done by the Ministry's staff only where this responsibility has traditionally rested with them. New flagpoles on new or existing Government buildings may be provided by the Ministry if, among other conditions, the occupying Department undertakes to hoist and lower the flags in accordance with these instructions and any others which may from time to time be issued by the Ministry of Public Building and Works (Sec. 12/4). The Ministry has no responsibility for flag flying by Service Departments other than to ensure that Union flags are flown over their headquarters buildings in London on days officially appointed for flag-flying. The Ministry's responsibilities include the provision of flag-staffs where appropriate, the issue and cleaning of flags (except those used by Service Departments), and the issue of instructions, which originate from the Lord Chamberlain's Office, as to occasions on which flags are to be flown.

DAYS ON WHICH FLAGS ARE TO BE FLOWN

2. Certain anniversaries are flag-flying days. These are the birthdays of the Sovereign and the consort, of the Sovereign's children and of the consorts and the children of former Sovereigns, the anniversaries of the Sovereign's accession, Coronation and wedding, and Remembrance Sunday. These dates, and others which apply to England, Scotland or Wales only, are listed in circular I.G.4 (which is amended when necessary, copies being circulated to all Departments and within the Ministry) and no other instructions about the flying of flags on these dates are circulated.

3. Flags are flown each year on the day appointed for the celebration of the Sovereign's official Birthday (Trooping the Colour) which is also Commonwealth Day, and, in the Greater London area only, on the occasions of the Prorogation and State Opening of Parliament; flags are flown on the occasion of the dissolution of Parliament only if Prorogation occurs the same day or if the dissolution is performed by the Sovereign in person or by a Royal Commission.

4. Subject to the command of the Sovereign, conveyed to the Minister by the Lord Chamberlain, flags are flown on Royal occasions such as the wedding of a Member of the Royal Family, or on each day of a State or Commonwealth Visit. In some of these cases, flags are flown in the Greater London area only.

5. Government buildings outside the Greater London area may fly flags when a member of the Royal Family visits the town in which they are situated provided it is known that municipal or commercial buildings in their neighbourhood are to do so. Government buildings should not set a lead on such occasions.

6. Subject to the instructions of the Lord Chamberlain in each case, flags are flown along the line of route of State Processions.

7. When any of the occasions mentioned in paras. 3 to 6 above occur, instructions about flag-flying will be issued by MPEW (Sec. A2/4).

8. Service Departments fly flags on the days listed on circular I.G.4 and also on the days especially appointed by the Lord Chamberlain. On other days they may fly their Departmental flags at their discretion.

FLAGS TO BE FLOWN

9. The flag to be flown from a single flagstaff is the Union flag (for exceptions see paragraphs 10 and 11). Where there is more than one flagstaff and flags are to be flown on each, the Union flag or an ensign incorporating the Union flag must be one of those flown. Other than the Union flag, ensigns and those mentioned in paragraphs 10 and 11, no flag may be flown from vertical flagpoles on Government Buildings without specific authority from the Ministry of Public Building and Works (Sec. A2/4). Other flags may however be flown from canted flagstaffs as part of a decorative scheme (see paragraph 21).

10. Except in the Greater London Area, the Royal Standard is usually flown on any building the Sovereign may visit, while the Sovereign is within the building. In the same way, when any other member of the Royal Family visits a Government building, his or her personal Standard may be flown. The Union flag is flown for members of the Royal Family not possessing a personal Standard.

No flag should be flown with the Royal Standard or with any personal Standard. Instructions on flying Royal and personal Standards may be obtained by the host from the Royal Household concerned, which will also lend the Standard required.

11. The following special arrangements for flag-flying exist by permission of the Sovereign:

- (1) The Lion Rampant is flown alone on the Scottish Office in London on all days nationally appointed for flag-flying. The Saltire (also called the St. Andrew's Cross) may be flown with the Union Flag on Government buildings in Scotland on all days appointed for national flag-flying and on St. Andrew's Day. The Saltire is also flown over the Scottish Office in London on St. Andrew's Day in place of the Lion Rampant.

(2) The Red Dragon of Wales may be flown with the Union flag on Government buildings in Wales and on the London Headquarters of the Welsh Office on all days nationally appointed for flag-flying and on St. David's Day.

(3) Departmental flags may be flown with the Union flag on all days nationally appointed for flag-flying provided;

(a) The Sovereign has approved their use and

(b) they are registered with the College of Arms.

(4) The Customs flag (which incorporates the Union flag) is flown every day on Customs houses except on days nationally appointed for flag-flying, when it is replaced by the Union flag.

(5) The Ministry of Transport flag is flown alone on Coastguard stations every day, except on days nationally appointed for flag-flying, when it is replaced by the Union flag.

(6) While Parliament is in session the Union Flag is flown daily on the Palace of Westminster from 10.0 a.m. until sunset or until the rising of the House, whichever is the earlier. Responsibility for the flying of this flag lies with the Lord Great Chamberlain, from whom the Depot Superintendent receives his instructions.

On the days appointed for flying flags, the flag on the Palace of Westminster is flown from 8 a.m. until sunset except that if the Lord Chamberlain orders flags to be flown on each day of a State Visit, this flag is hoisted at 6 a.m. on the first day only and at 10 a.m. on the other days.

HOW TO FLY FLAGS

12. These rules refer only to vertical flagpoles. They do not apply to canted flagpoles which are regarded as a means of decoration (see also paragraph 21).

13. (1) On the days appointed for the flying of flags, they are flown from 8 a.m. until sunset. Flags may be flown after sunset only when on special occasions they are to be floodlit as part of a scheme of decoration.

(2) One flag only may be flown on any one flagstaff.

(3) In no circumstances may any flag be flown in a superior position to the Union flag. The superior position is defined as follows:-

(a) the highest flagpole;

(b) the centre flagpole when a number of poles are of the same height (left centre pole when the number is even, when viewed from a position facing the building).

(c) when two flagpoles are of the same height, the Union flag should be flown on the left hand side when viewed from a position facing the building.

HALF MAST

14. Flags are flown at Half-mast:

- (1) Daily from the announcement of the death of the Sovereign until and including the day of the funeral except for Proclamation Day, when flags are hoisted right up from the time of the Proclamation (11.0 a.m.) until sunset.
- (2) On the day of the funeral of a Prime Minister or an ex Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. On Marlborough House alone, the Union flag may be flown at half-mast on the day of the funeral of any Commonwealth Prime Minister who dies in office.
- (3) On the day of the funeral of a Minister who died in office, over the Department concerned.
- (4) Subject to instructions from the Lord Chamberlain in each case, on the occasion of the death of a Member of the Royal Family, the Head of a Foreign State represented at the Court of St. James, or other distinguished personage.
- (5) Subject to the instructions of the Lord Chamberlain in each case, on the day of the funeral of a distinguished public servant; the Lord Chamberlain's instruction may relate only to the Department concerned.

On the occasions mentioned in sub-paras (4) and (5) above, the Lord Chamberlain's commands will be made known by MPBW (Sec. A2/4).

15. When a flag-flying day coincides with an occasion for half-masting, flags will be flown mast high unless the Lord Chamberlain (through the Ministry of Public Building and Works) instructs otherwise. The following exceptions, however, apply:

- (1) If the occasion of half-masting is the funeral of a distinguished public servant the Department concerned may, with the approval of the Lord Chamberlain, lower its flag to half-mast for the period of the funeral;
- (2) If the body of a very distinguished public servant is lying at a Government Office, the flag on the building concerned may be flown at half-mast until the body has been removed, when the flag should be hoisted right up.

ANCIENT MONUMENTS: PALACES

16. For the purposes of flag-flying, Ancient Monuments maintained by the Ministry of Public Building and Works fall into two categories:

(1) occupied Ancient Monuments, (2) unoccupied Ancient Monuments in the Department's ownership or guardianship. At flag-flying monuments in category (1) where there is a custodian the responsibility for flag flying rests with the Ministry. Where there is no custodian the responsibility lies with the occupiers. Monuments in both categories conform in general to the rules for Government buildings but there are monuments where individual flag flying rules apply, either by established tradition or, in the case of guardianship monuments, by conditions in the Deed of Guardianship. At Monuments not affected in this way, however, flags should not be flown in any manner contravening the Ministry's regulations.

17. The flying of flags over Royal Palaces occupied by the Sovereign is the responsibility of the Lord Chamberlain, on whose instructions the arrangements for flag-flying are made by the Ministry's Depot Superintendent.

18. The flying of flags at Hampton Court Palace is the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Building and Works and accords with the procedure customary for Government buildings. The arrangements for the flying of flags at other Palaces not occupied by the Sovereign are decided by the Lord Chamberlain.

The Resident Governor at the Tower of London is responsible for the flying of flags at the Tower, receiving instructions on special occasions directly from the Lord Chamberlain. It is customary for the Ministry's Depot Superintendent also to notify the Resident Governor of special flag-flying occasions.

20. In Northern Ireland, buildings of the Reserved Departments fly flags on the days listed in the circular I.G.4, with the addition of 17th March, St. Patrick's Day. Buildings of the Northern Ireland Government fly flags according to an independent list of regular flag-flying occasions. Sec. A2/4 notifies the North-Western Regional Headquarters of the Ministry of Public Building and Works of special flag-flying occasions where appropriate, including occasions for half-masting.

DECORATIVE SCHEMES

21. Draped flags and flags flown from banded flagstaffs are used for decorative purposes only, and do not come within the scope of the foregoing instructions. Permission to use flags for decorations must be obtained from the Ministry of Public Building and Works (Sec. A2/4), whose responsibility it is to ensure that flag protocol is not infringed by the scheme of decoration. The cost incurred in connection with decorations for State Occasions is the responsibility of Sec. A2/4. For other than State Occasions the cost will normally be recovered from the Government Department making or sponsoring the request for flags to be flown, though in certain exceptional cases the Ministry of Public Building and Works will meet the cost.

PROMULGATION OF INSTRUCTIONS

22. The Ministry of Public Building and Works (Sec. A2/4) will convey the Lord Chamberlain's instructions to all concerned. Within the Ministry, the Under Secretary, Scotland, the Director for Wales, the Regional Directors and the Director of Works (London) and the Senior Architect Ancient Monuments Branch will be informed by Sec. A2/4 and will then be responsible for ensuring that flags fly on buildings where hoisting them is a MPBW responsibility. Sec. A2/4 will also inform each Ministry which has flag-flying responsibilities; a Ministry so informed will pass on to its staff (in London and/or in the Provinces) such instructions as are necessary to ensure that flags fly on buildings where hoisting them is the occupying Department's responsibility.

23. The Under Secretary, Scotland, the Director for Wales, and the Regional Directors will provide County Councils with copies of Circular IG4 (Days for Hoisting Flags on Government buildings) and will let them know of any amendments to this Circular. In the event of a State Visitor coming to the area, the Director for Wales or Regional Director, will let the County Councils know what flag flying arrangements the Ministry is making, as advised by Sec. A2/4. The Under Secretary, Scotland will give information to County Councils which seek it. Sec. A2/4 will notify County Councils in the London region. If a County falls in two Regions, that which contains the County Town will be responsible for this notification.

24. When time permits, instructions will be issued in writing. If time is short, telephone and/or teleprinter messages will be passed. If an instruction has to be passed on outside normal office hours, this will be done by Sec. A2/4, who will contact nominated officers in the MPBW Regions, Scotland and Wales, and (for Central London) the Emergency Centre, Whitehall. It is important that Sec. A2/4 should be kept informed of changes in the name, address or telephone number of the nominated officers.

25. The Under Secretary, Scotland, the Director for Wales, Regional Directors and the Director of Works (London) should ensure that up-to-date lists are kept of buildings which have flag-poles on which they are responsible for flying the flags: the responsible officers in other Ministries with flag-flying responsibilities have been asked to do likewise. All concerned should also from time to time review their arrangements for receiving instructions and passing them on to the staff who actually hoist the flags. Should there be any doubt whether a flag should be flown on a particular building, the local officer of the Ministry of Public Building and Works will be consulted; in his turn, if in doubt, he should consult the Regional Directors (Under Secretary, Scotland, Director for Wales) who will get in touch with Sec. A2/4 if necessary.

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Administration
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