

Oregon Fire Service Honor Guard Flag Fold and Color Guard Manual

4-2009



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- O: Outstanding commitment to service and delivery.
- N: Nurturing personal and professional relationships.
- O: Overall consistency to excellence through training.
- R: Respect for those we serve and represent.

The Flag of the United States of America

The birthday of the stars and stripes started in 1777 when the continental congress resolved: That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white: that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation." Today we observe it as "flag day" every year on June 14th.

A law of April 4th 1818 required that a star be added for each new state on the 4th of July after it's admission but that the thirteen stripes remain unchanged.

The 50th star was added in 1960 for Hawaii and the flag has remained unchanged.

The National Flag represents the living country and is considered to be a living thing emblematic of the respect and pride we have for our nation. Our flag is a precious possession and we always display it properly and proudly.

Order of Precedence of Flags

When posting the Colors, there is an order of precedence. The order is as follows:

1. The flag of the United States.
2. Foreign national flags. (Displayed in alphabetical order)
3. Flag of the President of the United States of America.
4. State flags.
5. Military organizational flags.
6. Union flags. (Displayed in order of the local number)

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7. Department flags.

Color Guard Movements

The color bearers carry the colors and display the colors. A Color Guard is a team of at least 4 members but can be more. The minimum team is made up of a National Color Bearer, a National Guard, a State Color Bearer and a State Guard. If there are less than 4 members only the National Color can be posted. The national color bearer should always be the tallest in the detail and **the national Colors ALWAYS leads the way and never goes backward (retreat).**

If there is no detail leader (a 5th member) the national color bearer is in charge and calls the commands and leads the way. The national guard can go in front of the national colors but it is always the first flag on the move. The color guards are there to protect the colors and they are always assigned to guard a color and will remain that colors guard for the duration of the detail always in position to guard that color when on the march or posted. The position of carry for the guard's weapon is if an axe is to be held at port arms so that during colors movements the axe heads do not hit each other and for the pike pole is to be held as a flag staff with the hook facing toward the guard. The Color Bearer always returns to their Color Guard after any movement is completed solo and without a facing movement and to the direction they left the color team in.

Carry Colors:

Command "Carry - COLORS"

When standing at attention grasp the flag staff with the left hand keeping the upper arm at 90 degrees to the deck. The flag staff is held against the hollow of the shoulder the right hand at your side with the thumb at the pant seam, Position of Attention. Maintain two points of contact with the flag staff at all times. Preparatory command "Carry" raise the flag staff approximately 2" off

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the floor with the national flag slightly higher or even with the other flags but NEVER lower. Execution command "COLORS" step out in normal quick march time.

When with the colors **both** bearers always face the national flag after posting **then render a hand salute**. We do not mourn when posting the colors even at a funeral so the salute is always faster and crisp. If the guards are facing the colors they would render arms with the bearers, if they are facing away they would remain at port arms.

When "Under Arms" (with weapons) the command to salute is "PreSENT – ARMS" This would be used when the color team is together facing the same way as in presenting for the anthem, pledge or other.

Before any salute you should always be at the position of attention. Your shoulders and cover should stay level and square your heels should be together and your toes should be at a 45 degree angle so a boot will fit between them without stepping on your shoe.

On the execution command of "ARMS" a two second hand salute up (oneonethousandone – oneonethousandtwo) hold for a one count and To return to attention the command would be "OrDER – ARMS" return with the same count as up. The right hand should stop with the forefinger touching the rim of your cover above and slightly right of your right eye. Fingers and thumb in line extended straight, all the way down to the elbow. You should see only the palm of your hand and anyone in front of you should only see the backside of your hand. Your upper arm should be level with the deck your elbow in line with your body with your forearm at a 45 degree angle. Your fingers, wrist and forearm should form a straight line.

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Flag Fold

Folding our national flag is an ultimate tribute and honor therefore it MUST be practiced as much as possible before the ceremony. Under ideal conditions there would be enough honor guard members that this detail would not have any other responsibilities so they can concentrate on rendering the perfect folding honors. A flag should be properly pressed, trimmed and stretched and will fold better and tighter the more times it has been folded. This should not be done in front of family members so a practice room may be necessary so practice does not have to be cut short. Find out who is responsible to bring the flag and ask them to have it available when the honor guard practice starts or offer to use one that you have with you. Often the family has a designated flag that they want folded so a substitute may not work, pre-planning is essential with this detail. All the flag folding procedures are based on the 7 member casket team being ideal but it can be modified to use 6, 4, or even 2 members as needed. The detail leader should use short subdued commands and/or silent commands during this detail.

When the flag is to be folded, the flag detail lines up in two rows then on command marches in together using funeral cadence (60 steps per minute). When they reach their place at the casket each member halts. On command the team executes a center face so all members are facing the casket. The six members of the detail should then bend at the waist keeping the legs straight but not locked and place their hands on top of the flag in even rows. Their fingertips should be lined up with the edge of a color stripe on the flag shoulder width apart. The detail leader is stationed at the head with the other members positioned as follows:

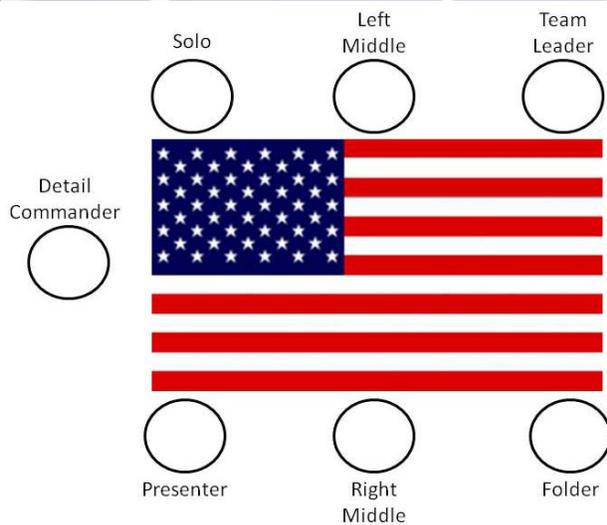
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On a silent signal from the team leader, the team will bend at the waist keeping the knees straight but not locked in unison to recover the flag. The flag detail leader secures the corner of the flag with his left hand, folder with his right hand. Presenter secures a corner with his left hand, solo with his right hand their other hands grasp the flag shoulder width apart with their hands directly in line with the member facing them. Middles secure with both hands, shoulder width apart, fingers tucked underneath and thumbs on top.

Once the team leader observes this, the team leader will give the folder a silent signal to prepare to stretch the flag out. On the silent signal the team leader, folder, presenter, and solo all take a side step toward the ends of the flag. Once the side step is completed, the team insures hand placement at shoulder width and gets a "bite", and sets a rail. The rail is established by the fold side folding

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the red stripe to the next red stripe and then folding it underneath with their fingers.

Once the rails and bite have been established, the casket team, while still in a bent over position, is ready to bring the flag level. The casket team leader tugs on the flag and the team comes up to the position of attention in three fluid counts. The flag detail then takes one step to the rear, bringing their elbows to their sides and forearms parallel to the ground. The flag is now level, centered, and tightly stretched over the casket. The Detail Commander is standing at the head of the flag/casket.

If rifle volleys and taps are to be given the flag should now be held in this position until the last note of taps. The detail commander gives the command, "PreSENT - ARMS" if a color guard is present or "HaND - SALUTE" if not and is echoed by the OIC of the other uniformed personnel. Firing Party prepares for volleys. All uniformed personnel, with hats, render a hand salute. Any color guards will execute a "present arms."

Immediately following rifle volleys, Taps is played. Upon completion of Taps, the flag is to be folded. It is the discretion of the OIC, whether to hold the salute during the flag folding or cut it prior to the flag being folded.

Folding – * NOTE see Flag Fold Hand Positions power point slides for more details, this may be very helpful.

The team leader gives one tug on the flag to inform the team to begin folding. On this signal, all members take one step towards the casket as they bring the flag up and together forming the first long fold. Arms should be extended and above the heads of the team to keep the fold off the casket. The flag is now vertical and perpendicular to the casket. The left side (solo, left middle and team leader) keeps their hands at the top or open end while the right side (presenter, right middle and folder) will dress the flag as they drop their hands to the bottom or closed end.

The team leader gives another tug and the flag is brought horizontal and level again with the casket. This is done by the right side pulling the bottom to them and the left side pulling the top to them. The flag should be centered, left to right, over the casket at all times. This sequence should take place quickly and it is up to the team leader to keep an eye on the other team member's readiness before moving on to the next fold. The flag is dressed after every fold. Keep the flag in the center of the casket and it should not touch the casket anymore.

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The team leader tugs the flag again and the second long fold is made in the same manner as the first but with no step. The flag is dressed and the team leader gives another tug. The presenter, solo and both middles bring their hands along the flag to grasp it with hands shoulder width apart. The folder slides their left index finger along the flag 6" to 10" as the team leader slides their right index finger along the flag 6" to 10". The folder lifts the corner of the flag with their right hand and folds the flag over.

The team leader dresses the corner and makes the first fold with his left hand using his right index finger as a pivot. The team leader and the folder take one side step toward the middle as the first fold is being made. The rest of the folds are made in the same way as the flag pivots over the index finger, which is on the head side of the casket. The flag is dressed each time. As each fold is made, the remainder of the team passes the flag to the folder and the team leader.

The solo and the presenter drop one hand to their front center belt line in a fist thumb up in unison using no exaggerated movements then repeat with the other hand as the flag is taken away by the left and right middle. When the hands are together thumbs up, facing each other and at their front center belt line in unison the solo and presenter begin to slowly raise their hands still in a fist palms together thumbs up toward the center of the rim of their cover. At the same time in unison they slightly bow their heads to meet their hands. They should now be looking at their thumbs and stop when the tips of their thumbs touch the center of the rim of their cover. They hold a oneonethousand pause to (say a prayer for the fallen) then in unison they slowly bring their hands down and return to the position of attention. This will be repeated by the other detail members at the appropriate time.

The folding continues with the right and left middle members passing the flag toward the team leader and the folder until just before the last fold. The right middle then rotates the open side of the flag toward the folder. Both middle members bring in unison their hands together thumbs up, facing each other and at their front center belt line in unison the right and left middle begin to slowly raise their hands still in a fist palms together thumbs up toward the center of the rim of their cover. At the same time in unison they slightly bow their heads to meet their hands. They should now be looking at their thumbs and stop when the tips of their thumbs touch the center of the rim of their cover. They hold a

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one thousand pause to (say a prayer for the fallen) then in unison they slowly bring their hands down and return to the position of attention.

The team leader supports the flag with the left hand as the folder tucks the remaining portion under the blue field. The folder then drops his/her hands to the side. The team leader places his/her right hand on the folded edge of the flag and balancing the flag with his/her left hand while rotating it up to his/her chest with the point facing down. The team leader is holding the flag point down with his thumbs to his chest and his fingers toward the folder in the middle of the flag. The team leader moves both hands out to the end points smoothing the flag. He/she repeats this motion as necessary at no time letting his/her hands leave the flag. The team leader grasps the flag near the corners and holds the flag up to his/her body centered on the uniform then moves his/her hands to the corners of the flag point down keeping his/her elbows in and his/her back straight. The team leader then brings the flag down to a 90-degree angle in a smooth three second count and extends it to the folder to take.

The folder takes the flag from the team leader by placing his/her hands inside those of the team leader on each side of the point that is facing the team leader fingers down, thumbs on top. The team leader releases the flag and brings his/her hands together thumbs up, facing each other and at their front center belt. The Team leader then holds this position until the folder is finished and comes to the same position.

The folder brings the flag towards his/her body centered over the casket. The folder turns the flag with his/her right hand and places his/her left hand on top of the flag flat near the center so that folded edge faces the head of the casket and then passes it to the right middle. The right middle grasps the flag palms down, thumbs on top on the outside of those of the folder keeping the flag centered over the casket.

The folder then brings his/her hands together thumbs up, facing each other and at their front center belt line. When the hands are together thumbs up, facing each other and at their front center belt line in unison the team leader and folder begin to slowly raise their hands still in a fist palms together thumbs up toward the center of the rim of their cover. At the same time in unison they slightly bow their heads to meet their hands. They should now be looking at their

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thumbs and stop when the tips of their thumbs touch the center of the rim of their cover. They hold a oneonethousand pause to (say a prayer for the fallen) then in unison they slowly bring their hands down and return to the position of attention. *Note this is done as the flag is passed down to the other members of the fold team without pause.

The right middle passes the flag to the presenter. The presenter receives the flag by placing his/her left-hand on top of the flag with the palm down in the center. The right hand is placed up underneath in the center of the flag in a fist. The right middle brings his/her hands to the side after the presenter takes the flag. The presenter then rotates it with the left hand so the folded edge faces away from his/her body keeping it centered and flat over the casket. The presenter then brings it in to his/her body keeping it flat so the point is centered on his/her uniform.

The presenter executes a half left face and the detail commander executes a half right face in unison. The detail commander stretches out his/her hands. The presenter places the flag in the hands of the detail commander. The detail commander accepts the flag by placing the left hand on top of the flag palm down placing the right hand on the bottom of the flag palm up. The presenter assumes the position of attention and performs a ceremonial salute.

The presenter turns right to face the casket. The detail commander raises the flag up to his/her body centered on the uniform then moves his/her hands to the corners of the flag point down. The detail commander then marches to the recipient with the flag held to his chest point down. The detail commander halts facing the recipient. He/she brings the flag down with the folded edge facing the recipient and places the flag in the hands of the recipient. Then the detail commander moves his/her left hand on the top palm down covering the recipients hand and the right hand on the bottom palm up covering the recipients other hand. The detail commander assumes the position of attention and performs a ceremonial salute.

The detail commander then returns to post at the end of the head of the casket. The detail commander then orders a "Ready face." The detail faces the direction they entered from. The detail commander retires the team by marching them off. "Ready, step."

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The detail commander will remain at the head of the casket until the next of kin and others attending the services depart, the casket is interred or the funeral home removes the casket.

If presenting the flag directly to the family the detail commander kneels on his/her right knee and extends the flag saying to the recipient a rehearsed script that can include all or some of the following. "Please accept this with our regrets, our gratitude and our love" or "This flag is presented on behalf of a grateful department, as a token of our appreciation for the honorable and faithful service rendered by your loved one" or other appropriate words. *NOTE If the flag is being presented for military service then the branch of the service served in and a grateful nation should be included in the script. The detail commander then comes to the position of attention and performs a ceremonial salute.

The detail commander then returns to post at the end of the head of the casket. The detail commander then orders a "Ready face." The detail faces the direction they entered from. The detail commander retires the team by marching them off. "Ready, step."

The detail commander will remain at the head of the casket until the next of kin and others attending the services depart, the casket is interred or the funeral home removes the casket.

References:

National Honor Guard Academy Manual class 2009

Clearwater Fire and Rescue Honor Guard Drill and Ceremonies Manual

USMC NAVMC 2691 Drill and Ceremony Manuals

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USAF Honor Guard Basic Protocol, Honors, AND Ceremonies
L5AZO8G000-001 and L5AZK8G000-002 December 2001, 11th Wing 11th Operations Group

Army Regulation 840–10 Heraldic Activities, Flags, Guidons, Streamers, Tabards, and
Automobile and Aircraft Plates. 1 November 1998

Oregon Fire Service Honor Guard By-Laws and Operations Manual 2007

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