

1. INTRODUCTION

A national flag is a flag that represents and symbolizes a given nation. It is flown by the government of that nation, but usually can also be flown by its citizens. A national flag is typically designed with specific meanings for its colours and symbols, which may also be used separately from the flag as a symbol of the nation. The design of a national flag is sometimes altered after the occurrence of important historical events. The burning or destruction of a national flag is a greatly symbolic act.

2. NATIONAL FLAG PROTOCOL

There is a great deal of protocol involved in the proper display of national flags. A general rule is that the national flag should be flown in the position of honour, and not in an inferior position to any other flag (although some countries make an exception for royal standards). The following rules are typical of the conventions when flags are flown on land:

- When a national flag is displayed together with any other flags, it must be hoisted first and lowered last.
- When a national flag is displayed together with the national flags of other countries, all the flags should be of approximately equal size and must be flown at an equal height, although the national flag of the host country should be flown in the position of honour (in the centre of an odd number of flagpoles or at the far right — left from an observer's point of view — of an even number of flagpoles).
- When a national flag is displayed together with flags other than national flags, it should be flown on a separate flagpole, either higher or in the position of honour.
- When a national flag is displayed together with any other flags on the same flagpole, it must be at the top, though separate flagpoles are preferable.
- When a national flag is displayed together with any other flag on crossed flagpoles, the national flag must be on the observer's left and its flagpole must be in front of the flagpole of the other flag.
- When a national flag is displayed together with another flag or flags in procession, the national flag must be on the marching right. If there is a row of flags, it should be in the position of honour.
- Half-masting only takes place on instruction of The Presidency and is reserved for individuals of distinction.

When hoisting take the flag first to the top of the flagstaff and then lowering it by one flag width. When lowering the flag take the flag first to the top and take it down. All other flags must be removed when the national flag is half-masted. A half-mast flag may not be left out overnight even if there is a light shining on it.

- Never walk between two flag staffs as it forms a unity.

3. MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL FLAG BANK

3.1. The Flag Bank Register

The City of Johannesburg has a Flag Bank Register. One Hundred and Ninety-Six(196) national flags are captured in the register.

All national flags are to be kept in safe storage by the International Relations Unit and will only be issued to Officials on presentation of a signed flag bank request.

The national flag must be returned to the International Relations Unit within 3 working days of returning from an event for safe keeping.

3.2. Flag Bank Request

The national flag must be returned to the International Relations Unit within 3 working days of returning from an event for safe keeping.

The flag bank request form contains the following information:

- Name of the event
- Proposed dates for the event
- Objective/purpose of the event.
- Visit Co-ordinator.
- Names of the members of the delegation.

4. NATIONAL FLAG FUNCTION

National flags are used during the following events:

- 4.1 City of Johannesburg Executive, Civic and Official functions
- 4.2 Hosting the visiting delegations
- 4.3 Twinning cities and signing of Twinning agreements

Further information and guidance on the National Flag bank are available from the International Relations Unit in Group Strategy, Policy Coordination and Relations from the responsible official:

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