

**Forest Service Handbook
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**Forest Service Handbook 1309.19 – Casualty Assistance Handbook
Chapter 60 – Ceremonies, Monuments, and Donations**

Amendment Number: 1309.19-2024-5

Effective date: January 19, 2024

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Approved by: Antoine Dixon, Deputy Chief, Business Operations

Date approved: January 12, 2024

Responsible Staff: Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Office of Safety and Occupational Health (OSOH)

Last Change:

Superseded Document(s): 1309.19_60, Amendment 1309.19-2019-1, August 13, 2019

Digest: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

Section 61.1: Removes Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry Director; adds approval through the Casualty Assistance Program.

Section 61.3: Removes reference to fire.

Section 61.4: Removes reference to fire, set direction with reference to FSH 6509.33 Zero Code, Section 3(d) Family Travel.

Section 61.5: Sets direction for employees' uniforms when attending funerals.

Section 61.6: Updates direction in this section from Department of Agriculture Departmental Regulation to DR 1620-003.

Effective August 13, 2019. Revisions as listed below to FSH 1309.19, chapter 60:

Section 60: Changes chapter title from "Award Ceremonies, Monuments, and Donations" to "Ceremonies, Monuments, and Donations." Revises chapter in its entirety with updated direction, procedures and managerial responsibilities for flags at half-staff, memorial ceremonies, posthumous awards and ceremonies and the erection of memorials, interpretative sites permanent plaques, and cornerstones.

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This chapter provides direction on the allowances and use of appropriated funds to memorialize a deceased person whose contribution to the Forest Service is worthy of special recognition.

61.1 - Flags at Half Staff

The President of the United States and the Secretary of Agriculture approve the flying of flags at half-staff Title 4 United States Code Chapter 1, the Flag. The authority to fly the flags at half-staff is delegated to the Chief Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations part 2.8.

Regional Foresters, Station Directors, International Institute of Tropical Forestry Director, Forest Products Laboratory Director, and Washington Office Staff Directors must seek Chief's approval through the Casualty Assistance Program.

After obtaining approval to lower the flag from the Chief, flags are flown at half-staff and only on the day of the interment. When the death of an employee results from fighting fire or in a law enforcement action, the Chief may approve at half-staff for up to three days.

61.2 - Funerals/Interments

The funeral/interment is for the family, and they direct the planning of it. There is no authority to use appropriations to provide monetary support for these services. Employees may help coordinate Forest Service involvement if requested by family representative and may attend an interment in accordance with FSH 6109.11, chapter 30, section 38.2 (FSH 6109.11, ch. 30, sec. 38.2), Situations Appropriate for Granting Excused Absence/Administrative Leave.

Forest Service Honor Guard may be requested and approved in accordance with FSH 1309.13, The Honor Guard Handbook,. The flags for the caskets and Honor Guard folding ceremonies are an appropriate purchase with government funds. Casket flags must be 9 ½ feet by 5 feet to government specifications Title 4, United States Code, chapters 5 through 9, Flag and Seal, Seat of Government, and The States.

61.3 - Memorial Ceremonies

Ceremonies may be independent of the interment and directed by the Forest Service. For example, the planting of a memorial tree, the solemn entry of mourners indoors, or the procession of vehicles outdoors.

The conduct of ceremonies to honor the contributions of deceased employees is an important aspect of the Forest Service culture. Ceremonies are a tribute to the families of the deceased and further serve the interest of the Forest Service. Activities to honor the deceased are conducted in a manner that displays an appropriate level of respect.

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Unit Line Officers are expected to be fully aware of, and approve, the number of Federal resources devoted to the ceremony as a measure of providing appropriate respect for the deceased, and as managers are responsible for the effective and efficient use of government funds, property, and employees' official time.

Authorized expenses for goods and services in connection with a ceremony are guided by Appropriations Law and the Federal Acquisition Regulation. It is difficult to list every allowable or prohibited item; sound judgment is required when planning for these events. Examples of some common requests that are not allowable uses of appropriated funds are: food, beverages, music (live or recorded), floral arrangements, and plants. These types of services and supplies are often furnished from personal expenses or through private donation.

Charge the costs of ceremonies, including planning and implementation, to the fund and program where the employee was working when the incident occurred.

61.4 - Posthumous Award

The Forest Service may present to a family representative, a posthumous non-monetary award to honor fallen employees. The Government Employees Incentive Awards Act is the statutory authority for the award Title 5, United States Code, Chapter 4505, Awards to former employees. Awards are non-monetary and must display a Forest Service shield or other appropriate inscription related to the granting of the award.

Forest Service may finance travel and per diem expenses for one representative of the award recipient from the fund and program where the employee was working when the incident occurred, reference FSH 6509.33, zero code, section 3(d), Family Travel.

Families of deceased employees may not travel at government expense to attend private award ceremonies, memorial services, or other functions not federally sponsored, reference Comptroller General B-258216, July 27, 1995. Additionally, the Forest Service is not authorized to pay for the transportation and subsistence of extended family and friends to any ceremony or funeral/interment.

61.5 - Employee Attendance at Funeral and/or Memorial Ceremony

Employee attendance at the funeral or related ceremony for a coworker is considered appropriate for the purpose of sustaining employee morale, maintaining employee productivity, and reinforcing to the Forest Service and others the significance of the deceased to the Forest Service. Employees attending the interment or related ceremony on official duty shall charge their salary and travel expenses to their respective work-related fund and program (ref: FSH 6109.11, ch. 30, sec. 38.2), Situations Appropriate for Granting Excused Absence/Administrative Leave).

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Employees may wear Forest Service uniforms and uniform components when attending funerals or memorial ceremonies. Employees shall use good judgment when wearing the uniform to avoid situations which may reflect adversely on the Forest Service. In appropriate conduct or behavior of employees while in uniform, whether on or off duty, may result in disciplinary action reference FSM 6170, Personnel Relations.

61.6 - Memorials, Plaques, and Cornerstones

The Forest Service may use appropriated funds to finance the erection of permanent memorials, plaques, and cornerstones on buildings or building sites owned by the Department of Agriculture in accordance with Departmental Regulation DR 1620-003, Facilities and Space Management. Permanent structures or plaques are items installed in such a manner that its removal would significantly damage or destroy the structure of the associated site.

Coordinate with local Recreation, Lands, and Engineering staffs to determine the appropriate location and characteristics of proposed interpretative sites and objects of remembrance. The Regional Office or Station Area forwards the proposal request to the Procurement and Property Services staff, in order to obtain approval from The Department of Agriculture, Office of Property and Environmental Management, prior to any obligation.

Requests for the erection of permanent memorials and plaques must include:

1. A justification explaining why the permanent memorial or plaque is necessary or desired.
2. Sketches showing the design and location on the building or site, and photographs of the building or site.
3. An estimate of expenses.
4. The unit responsible for such expenses.

61.7 - Monuments

There is no authority for the erection of a monument on public property if it has not been specifically authorized by law reference Comptroller General A-35117, February 28, 1931, Memorials Erection of on Public Property at Private Expense. Appropriated funds may not be contributed to local government units to partially fund a monument on private land, unless specifically authorized by law. Such monuments are not included in authorized forest service "Community Support Activities" (Comptroller General B-243862, July 28, 1992).

Appropriations may be used to build an interpretative site such as a kiosk, to provide information to the public about fire prevention or other guidelines for visitor safety and resource protection. The names of employees killed in the line of duty may be included with

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appropriate respect and dignity, in the display. Interpretative wording or inscriptions may not include religious references or quotations. Follow existing guidelines for planning, approving, and funding the construction and maintenance of interpretative sites.

Appropriations are authorized for the care of graves of persons who lost their lives fighting forest fires Title 16, United States Code, Chapter 554c, Care of Employees' Graves.

61.8 - Donations

There is no authority to collect or accept donations on behalf of individuals, including employee's families. Employees should refer the public to non-profit organizations or to organizations designated by the family for the receipt of donations.

Statutory authority for Forest Service acceptance of donations is restricted to contributions that further the Agency's mission and programs Title 7, United States Code, Chapter 2269, Gifts of property; acceptance and administration by Secretary of Agriculture; Federal tax law consideration; separate fund in Treasury; regulations. Such as, forest management, recreation sites, and tree planting. Donated funds may also be used to purchase food and drink for receptions, gifts, floral arrangements, or photographs, reference Government Accountability Office, Principles of Appropriations Law, Volume II, Chapter 6, section 3.