



May 20, 2021

For Immediate Release:

Public Safety Support & Honorary Flags

The City of Oconomowoc and the Western Lakes Fire District would like to provide an explanation of the Thin Blue and Thin Red Line Flags that have proudly been flown outside of our respective buildings. Flags are symbols used to show support, honor, and pride by various organizations, and the thin line flags are in honor of those in Public Safety that have made the ultimate sacrifice and have deep meaning to our local employees.

In 1962, President Kennedy proclaimed May 15 as **National Peace Officers Memorial Day** and the calendar week in which May 15 falls, as National Police Week. Established by a joint resolution of Congress in 1962, National Police Week pays special recognition to those law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty for the safety and protection of others.

“The blue line flag has long been a symbol of solidarity and pride within the law enforcement community, so much so that it has become a common ceremonial feature at events memorializing fallen officers...Regrettably, in the last year we have seen that symbol hijacked and misappropriated by groups with a disingenuous political agenda that bears no resemblance to the professional calling that the flag is meant to embody, and the violent siege at the U.S. Capitol provided the best evidence of that.”

Jim Palmer, President of Wisconsin Professional Police Association

National Fallen Firefighters Memorial since 1990 is officially designated by the [United States Congress](#) as the [National Memorial](#) to career and volunteer fallen firefighters. Located in [Emmitsburg, Maryland](#), it was conceived as a tribute to [American fire service](#). The memorial was constructed in 1981 on the campus of the [National Fire Academy](#). Plaques listing the names of firefighters encircle the plaza from the same year. When a firefighter dies on duty, local fire officials notify the [United States Fire Administration](#) and a notice is immediately posted on the Memorial grounds. The flags over the Memorial are flown at [half-staff](#) in honor of the fallen firefighter. If some criteria are met, the fallen firefighter is honored at the annual memorial service. The Memorial is open to the public throughout the year.

On October 16, 2001, President [George W. Bush](#) approved legislation requiring the United States flag to be lowered to [half-staff](#) on all federal buildings to memorialize fallen firefighters. Public Law 107-51 requires this action to occur annually in conjunction with observance of the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service. The date of the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service is traditionally the first Sunday in October. A candlelight vigil is held the night before the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service. The service is held at

Dedicated to providing the highest quality police, fire, and emergency medical services to the citizens we serve

the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial. These services memorialize Fallen Firefighters from around the nation.

The **Blue** Line Flag to many of us inside and outside of the police profession this flag symbolizes a commitment to public service up to and including laying down one's own life to protect the lives of others. We do not condone the behavior and use of the flag at partisan political rallies or during the riots at the United States Capitol. The use of this flag for these events creates a terrible image for police and our nation.

The **Red** Line Flag to many of us is a symbol of protection, support, and honor that is used by civilians and firefighters alike to show respect for those firefighters seriously injured or killed in the line of duty. This symbol is meant to provide support, hope, and love to these men and woman from coast to coast that risk their lives selflessly protecting others.

Our practice moving forward will be for the respective Blue or Red line flags to be flown at our public safety buildings at the times listed below. We will do our best to educate the community about these flags and the true symbol they represent. We are working together to provide the right approach for honoring the men and women that the blue line flag and red line flag represent. Both flags will be flown in the future and we provide education to the community so that the true meaning of what they represent can be supported and cherished.

- National Police Week
- National Firefighters Week
- For one day in the event of any City of Oconomowoc Police or Western Lakes Fire District active duty or retired employee death.
- For three days in the event of any Wisconsin Law Enforcement, Fire, or EMS line of duty death.

Mayor Magnus has supported both the City of Oconomowoc Police Department and Western Lakes Fire District and our employees as public safety providers. The Mayor has spent significant time learning about both our professions so that he can appropriately support our efforts providing high quality services to the citizens we serve. At no time has Mayor Magnus stated that he feels these flags are racist, threatening, or offensive. He has received complaints from others with concerns that flags other than the American, State, or City Flags should not be flown outside of public buildings for a variety of reasons. As a supporter of Law Enforcement, Fire, and EMS he has approved the thin blue and thin red line flags to fly when we are supporting or honoring the public safety employees that risk their lives to serve others or have made the ultimate sacrifices while serving.

It is important that we as a community are respectful to different opinions. These differences can create a divide, but through communication, understanding, and listening we can come together as a community. We are blessed to serve such an amazing community and citizens and are committed to educating the community the meaning of these important symbols to our local heroes.

For reference we have included a site <https://www.flagandbanner.com/flags/thin-line-flags-faq.asp> regarding the various thin line flags that are flown to support and honor those that have made the ultimate sacrifice in various professions in our Country.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Magnus

Robert P. Magnus, Mayor

James P. Pfister

James P. Pfister, Police Chief

Bradley R. Bowen

Bradley R. Bowen, Fire Chief