

Proper Placement of Flags on your Motorcycle

The American Legion's Americanism Commission offer guidelines on how to properly fly the U.S. flag from a motorcycle.

With more and more riders across America wanting to show their patriotism there have been many questions about how to fly Old Glory. U.S. Flag code does not address motorcycle display of the American Flag, however using guidelines established by the code,

The American Legion's National Americanism Commission offers these suggestions:

If the U.S. Flag is flown alone, it must be displayed in the center, or at the rider's right side.

Any other flags, other countries, POW flags, service branch, etc., should be displayed to the rider's left.

Those flags can be the same size as the U.S. Flag or smaller. For safety it is recommended that any and all flags be flown from the back of a motorcycle.

As a side note: recent testing shows that flag poles taller than the ceiling of parking garages will not remain in their upright position and can become disconnected from the motorcycle. Also tall flag poles that may come in contact with power lines should only be flown on motorcycles with grounding straps and it is recommended the rider or riders not be in contact with the metal parts of the motorcycle. Leather gloves are advised and sunglasses help diminish the effects of bright flashes that may be noticed from time to time.

Remember Patriotic safety is everyone's responsibility

The American flag should be displayed in the center.

If there are two flags, the American Flag will be at marching right or simply it should match the protocol for a car - displayed on the passenger side.

Question:

I'm the V.P. of a P.O.W.-M.I.A. motorcycle club in ____. During parades we all display both the U.S flag and the P.O.W. flag on the back of our bikes. Here's the problem.....I say that since these flags are viewed from the rear (after the bike passes) and not the front (as the bike would be coming toward you) the U.S. flag has to be on your left and the P.O.W. flag on the right. Since you can't see the flags from the front while the rider is on the bike, they must be displayed this way. If they are displayed in reverse, then you've put a flag to the U.S. flags' own right. The only time I can agree that the flags can be reversed is if they are on poles and are above the rider or out to the side of the rider where they can be seen from the front, then the U.S. flag would be to the viewers left as the bike approached them in parade form. Now, all that said, I'm the only one that sees it this way. Everyone else says

my bike is backwards but I refuse to change. The flags are viewed from the rear, my way has to be correct. Can you lend any help on this matter? Thanks in advance.

Answer

Here is what the US Flag Code says about displaying the US Flag on vehicles.

Position and manner of display:

The flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides, or back of a vehicle or of a railroad train or a boat. When the flag is displayed on a motorcar, the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.

The code is silent regarding motorcycles in particular.

I think it reasonable to extend it's meaning to include any type of vehicle be it a horse drawn wagon or motorcycle. The context of this subsection is to speak of vehicles, be they boats or trains or motorcars, as having no distinction for the purpose at hand.

The code makes no exceptions depending on from where the flag is viewed.

The flag will almost always be viewed incorrectly from some viewer's standpoint.

The way I read the code, the operative instruction puts the US flag on the vehicle's RIGHT side no matter where one might stand as the vehicle passes by. Even a bike has a left and right side. I would put it on the BIKE's right side. The Code can not place the flag in the position of honor as it will be seen from every viewer at once. So, just as with flags placed on a stage, The Code settles the question based on the flag's own right. As the flag moves forward in a parade, The Flag's own right is also your bike's right fender.

To sum up, flag placement is from the point of view of Old Glory, not the point of view of the viewer.

Keep in mind that the Flag Code cannot anticipate every circumstance.

Well-meaning individuals may come to different conclusions regarding its meaning.

As well, The Code is not a law. It is a suggested set of protocol measures.