



# GENERAL ORDER

Loudoun County Sheriff's Office

**Chapter:** Operations

**Section:** 401.3

**Subject:** Operational Functions

**Topic:** Ceremonial Protocol

**Enacted:** 07/30/2015

**Last Review:** 01/19/2024

**Review:** 11/01/2026

## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to provide instruction of proper respect that shall be shown to the American flag, as well as conduct expected of sworn personnel during the playing of the National Anthem and the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

## II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office to establish and follow uniform standards regarding saluting and respectful behavior during the playing of the National Anthem, recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and participation in funeral details.

## III. PROCEDURE

### A. Appropriate Honors

1. Appropriate honors are to be rendered primarily when the National Anthem is played, the American flag is presented, the Pledge of Allegiance is recited, or during funeral details. Other ceremonial purposes, such as retirement or promotion ceremonies, may dictate the need for rendering appropriate honors.
2. Appropriate honors consist of either a hand salute or a "hand over heart" drill movement.
  - a. A hand salute will be rendered when a deputy is wearing a cover and in uniform.
  - b. A "hand over heart" will be rendered when a deputy is not wearing a cover, whether in uniform or civilian attire.
  - c. Those not physically capable of rendering appropriate honors should turn toward the flag or music if able to do so. Guidance for rendering each drill movement is given below.
    1. Indoors and Outdoors
      - a. Typically, a deputy will remove his/her cover once indoors. A deputy is permitted to wear a cover indoors if "under arms" (i.e., carrying a

firearm in the course of duty), but this is primarily recommended only if the deputy is taking part in a ceremony such as a promotion or graduation or is part of the Honor Guard.

- b. "Indoors" shall be defined as any structure that is designed to exist permanently that has a covered roof, such as a building.
- c. "Outdoors" shall be defined as being present outside of any structure, or present inside a structure that does not have a roof or is not designed to exist permanently, such as a sports arena or a large pavilion tent. For the purposes of this General Order, "outdoors" includes covered walks and shelters open on the sides to weather.

## 2. Position of Attention

- a. All appropriate honors will only be rendered from the position of attention. To assume this position:
  - i. The heels are brought together precisely so that they are on the same line with the toes pointing out equally, forming an angle of 90 degrees to the body. The legs are kept straight without locking the knees. The body is held erect with the hips level, chest lifted and arched, and shoulders square and even.
  - ii. The arms are hung straight, without stiffness, along the sides with the back of hands outward. The fingers are curled so that the tips of the thumbs are alongside and touching the first joint of the forefingers. The thumbs are kept straight and along the seams of the trousers with all fingertips touching the trouser legs.
  - iii. The head is kept erect and held squarely to the front with the chin drawn in so that the axis of the head and neck is vertical. The deputy should straight to the front, with the weight of the body equally on the heels and balls of the feet.

## 3. Hand Salute

- a. The hand salute is a three-count movement. This means that the saluting deputy should be able to count silently to three from start to finish of the movement.

- b. The command is "present arms."
- c. On the command of execution ("arms"), raise the right hand to the hat and, with the tip of the forefinger, touch the rim of the visor slightly to the right of the right eye. The fingers and thumb are extended and joined, palm down. The outer edge of the hand is barely canted downward. The upper arm is horizontal.
- d. The command to cease the salute and return to the position of attention is "order arms." This is a one-count movement.
- e. On the command of execution ("arms"), return the hand to the side and resume the position of attention.
- f. A hand salute is only rendered with the right hand. If the deputy is not part of a formation or detail, he/she should turn his/her head and eyes toward the person singing or the band playing the anthem, or flag as the hand salute is rendered. If the deputy is part of a formation or detail, he/she should remain at the position of attention in that formation or detail.

#### 4. Hand Over Heart

- a. The hand over heart is a three-count movement. The saluting deputy should be able to count silently to three from start to finish of the movement.
- b. The command is "present arms."
- c. On the command of execution ("arms"), raise the right hand across the chest with the fist unclenched. Place the hand, palm down, over the heart. All four fingertips should cover the left breast. The upper arm will be at an angle that is roughly forty-five degrees.
- d. The command to cease the salute and return to the position of attention is "order arms." This is a one-count movement.
- e. On the command of execution ("arms"), return the hand to the side and resume the position of attention.

- f. A hand over heart is only rendered with the right hand. If not part of a formation or detail, a deputy's head and eyes should be turned toward the anthem or flag as the hand salute is rendered. If part of a formation or detail, the deputy should remain stationary at the position of attention.

**B. Guidance for Master of Ceremonies**

1. The presentation of colors should always be the first activity at the start of a ceremony. The presentation of colors should precede all invocations, introductions, opening remarks, etc. The National Anthem may be either sung or played via recording or musical instrument. If the Pledge of Allegiance is to be recited, it always follows the National Anthem.

2. The following script is recommended for anyone acting as Master of Ceremonies at an official function:

“Would everyone please rise for the presentation of the colors by the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard. Immediately after the presentation of the colors, the National Anthem will be (played) or (sung by [singer's name]). Please also remain standing for the singing or playing of the National Anthem.”

3. If desired, the Master of Ceremonies may also provide this additional instruction:

“Those not physically capable of standing or saluting should turn toward the flag or music, if able.”

**C. Guidance for Audiences**

1. To avoid confusion among any members of the audience at an official function, it is recommended that the following written instructions be inserted in programs or handed out at ceremonies:

- a. For indoor ceremonies and during the presentation of colors and the playing or singing of the National Anthem and/or in response to the command of “present arms,” individuals should place their right hand over their heart.
- b. For outdoor ceremonies and during the playing or singing of the National Anthem and/or in response to the command of “present arms,” individuals in uniform and covered should render a hand salute. All others should place their right hand over their heart.

**D. Funeral Detail**

1. If a formal Honor Guard detail is present at any funeral, the following recommendations apply:
  - a. At a funeral detail, the deputy/supervisor in charge shall command the detail as a unit in presenting arms.
  - b. At the passing of the casket, when it is flag-draped, the hand salute will be rendered on command of the deputy in charge.
  - c. The order "present arms" will be given prior to the casket passing in front of the first deputy in the formation. The salute will be held until the casket has passed the last deputy or the casket has reached its destination (i.e. building, hearse, or gravesite). At this time, the command "order arms" will be given by the deputy in charge.
2. In addition to the casket, salutes shall be rendered to the nearest surviving relative of the fallen, using the same guidelines established above.
  - a. At funeral details where an urn accompanied by a folded flag is present, the Honor Guard detail shall render the same honors as for a flag-draped casket.

**E. Additional Guidance**

1. Whenever the National Anthem is played to accompany the raising or lowering of the colors, and deputies are not in a formation or not in a vehicle, the deputies should come to the position of attention and face the colors. The appropriate honors shall be rendered at the first note of the National Anthem. The salute shall be held until the last note of the National Anthem. Deputies shall remain standing at attention until the American flag has been fully raised or lowered.
2. If in a vehicle, not assigned to a call for service, and in the immediate vicinity, deputies should stop their vehicles off the roadway, lower the volume of their radio, and remain where they are until the American flag has been fully raised or lowered.
3. When the flag is passing by in a parade, in review, when passing or being passed by an undraped casket that is being paraded, presented, or on formal display, members will render the prescribed salute at a distance of six paces and hold the

salute until six paces beyond it or until it has passed by six paces. Occasions such as these fall under the same guidelines as the presentation of the colors.

4. Small American flags carried by individuals, such as those carried by spectators at celebrations, ceremonies, and parades are not saluted.
5. The marks of respect described above are also rendered to the National Anthem of any country when played during official occasions.
6. A hand over the heart is the appropriate honor during the Pledge of Allegiance for all uniformed and civilian members, except members of a specific detail such as Honor Guard, bugler, etc.
7. For those situations that may arise during an occasion which are not specifically addressed in this General Order, the officer or supervisor in charge will direct employees under their supervision as to the appropriate courtesy to be rendered.