

Raise the Flag

Most, if not everyone, knows the very familiar black and white checkered flag you see waving at the end of an automobile race indicating to the drivers it is the end of the race and the first driver completing the most laps who passes it is the winner. That is only one of many flags used in racing or track events.

Flags are designed as a communication tool informing the drivers of anything that could affect their car or track conditions at or before the next corner. Each corner has a safety flag location operated by one person called a corner worker, and one person designated as a communicator between the corners and the race stewards. These corner workers are the only people with flags except for the "starter" positioned at the start/finish line. The corner workers may display the flags either in a waving or stationary manner. If the flag is waving the condition is immediately ahead. What is most important is understanding, as a driver, you really don't know what is going on up ahead on the track other than what you can see directly in front and in back of you.

The corner workers through the communicators are in constant contact with the race stewards in the tower and all the other corner. If anything has happened on the track that affects the safety or condition of the track during the current event, it is the job of the corner workers to make you aware of it. They are also looking at you making sure you show signs that you recognize they are there. So, during the warm up laps you should wave to them signifying you acknowledge they are there. As I said, they are watching not just to see that you are driving in a safe manner but also that your car is not showing any dangerous signs such as fluid loss, smoke, or flames. If they do see any of those issues the flag will be pointed directly at you. The flag color will basically tell you what to do.

These standard flags and flagging procedures are used at many events:

- GREEN—The course is clear and the event is underway
- YELLOW—Take care—no passing, or a hazardous condition is ahead. Reduce speed. If the flag is waving, a hazard may exist before the next corner station.
- YELLOW with VERTICAL RED STRIPES—Take care, a slippery condition ahead, possibly oil or coolant on the track, or debris. Slow down to assess the situation then proceed. No passing is allowed.

- RED—Stop as soon as possible to the side of the track within sight of a corner station allowing room for emergency vehicle to get through, check your mirrors and wait for instructions from the closest corner station.

- BLACK—If the flag is pointed directly at your car, come in on the next lap and report to the track official. If a black flag is displayed at all stations that means that all drivers should proceed to the pit area.

- BLACK with a RED CIRCLE (Referred to as the Meatball Flag)—A mechanical failure or problem has been noticed on your car by a corner worker or track official. Pull into the pits as soon as possible to meet with a track official or tech inspector.

- BLUE with YELLOW or WHITE DIAGONAL STRIPES—this flag is held in a stationary position and is sometimes called a "move over flag." It means there is a faster car that wants to pass. Follow the passing rules, and permit the pass at the next designated location. Some schools just use a solid blue flag. If the flag is waving, check your mirrors immediately, because someone is coming up fast.

- WHITE—This tells you that there is a slow moving vehicle ahead and you are allowed to pass in caution.

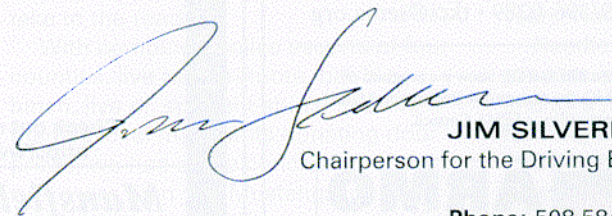
- CHECKERED FLAG (black and white)—Your session is complete. Slow down to cool the car; pull into the pits at the first possible chance.

These are the flags used at many events, but not all are used at all events, and because of that the drivers' meetings at the beginning and middle of the day are so important and mandatory!

It is also important to communicate your intentions when leaving the track by raising your hand outside the window, lifting it high with your fist closed—this is the proper communication to everyone that you are about to leave the track.

As in life, communication is always of prime importance, but never more so than on the race track.

Lets have safe fun,



JIM SILVERMAN
Chairperson for the Driving Events

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