

Burial in a National Cemetery

Burial benefits available include a gravesite in any of our [125 national cemeteries](#) with available space, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a [Government headstone or marker](#), a [burial flag](#), and a [Presidential Memorial Certificate](#), at no cost to the family. Some veterans may also be eligible for [Burial Allowances](#). Cremated remains are buried or inurned in national cemeteries in the same manner and with the same honors as casketed remains.

Burial benefits available for spouses and dependents buried in a national cemetery include burial with the veteran, perpetual care, and the spouse or dependents name and date of birth and death will be inscribed on the veteran's headstone, at no cost to the family.

Burial in a Private Cemetery

Burial benefits available for veterans buried in a private cemetery include a [Government headstone or marker](#), a [burial flag](#), and a [Presidential Memorial Certificate](#), at no cost to the family. Some veterans may also be eligible for [Burial Allowances](#). There are not any benefits available to spouses and dependents buried in a private cemetery.

Preparing in Advance

For Burial in a VA National Cemetery

Gravesites in [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) national cemeteries cannot be reserved in advance; however, reservations made prior to 1962 will be honored. Families are encouraged to prepare in advance by discussing cemetery options, collecting the veteran's military information including discharge papers, and by contacting the cemetery where burial is desired.

For Burial in a Private Cemetery

We suggest that if burial will be in a private cemetery and a Government headstone or marker will be requested for the veteran's grave, that the family complete [VA Form 40-1330, *Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veterans' Cemetery*](#), in advance and place it with the veterans military discharge papers for use at the time of need.

Burial Arrangements

Requests for burial in a [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) national cemetery cannot be made via the Internet.

No special forms are required when requesting burial in a VA national cemetery. The person making burial arrangements should have their funeral home contact the national cemetery in which burial is desired at the time of need. Scheduling can be done seven days a week for interments on Mondays through Fridays.

If possible, the following information concerning the deceased should be provided when the cemetery is first contacted:

- Full name and military rank;
- Branch of service;
- Social security number;
- Service number;
- VA claim number, if applicable;
- Date and place of birth;
- Date and place of death;
- Date of retirement or last separation from active duty; and,
- [Copy of any military separation documents](#), such as the Department of Defense Form 214 (DD-214).

The discharge documents must specify active military duty and show that release from active duty was under other than dishonorable conditions.

Viewing facilities are not available and funeral services cannot be held at VA national cemeteries, but a final committal service may be performed. For safety reasons, these committal services are held in committal shelters located away from the gravesite. Burial will take place following the committal service.

Floral arrangements may accompany the casket or urn from the committal shelter and will be placed on the grave after burial.

A headstone or marker will be ordered by cemetery personnel upon inscription approval by the next of kin and a burial flag will be provided.

Upright headstones are standard in most national cemeteries, however, some have both upright headstone and flat marker sections. Be sure to discuss these options with the cemetery director prior to burial.

The same procedures are followed if the veteran's eligible spouse or dependent predeceases the veteran. In most cases, one gravesite is provided for the burial of all eligible family members and a single headstone or marker is provided. When both spouses are veterans, two gravesites and two headstones or markers may be provided if requested.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is responsible for providing [Military Funeral Honors](#). The DOD program, "Honoring Those Who Served," calls for funeral directors to request military funeral honors on behalf of the veterans' families. Veterans' organizations may assist in the provision of military funeral honors. In support of this program, VA national cemetery staff may assist to coordinate military funeral honors.

Burial Flags

Why Does VA Provide a Burial Flag?

A United States flag is provided, at no cost, to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran who served honorably in the U. S. Armed Forces. It is furnished to honor the memory of a veteran's military service to his or her country. VA will furnish a burial flag for memorialization for each other than dishonorable discharged

- veteran who served during wartime
- veteran who died on active duty after May 27, 1941
- veteran who served after January 31, 1955
- peacetime veteran who was discharged or released before June 27, 1950
- certain persons who served in the organized military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines while in service of the U.S. Armed Forces and who died on or after April 25, 1951
- certain former members of the Selected Reserves

Who Is Eligible to Receive the Burial Flag?

Generally, the flag is given to the next-of-kin, as a keepsake, after its use during the funeral service. When there is no next-of-kin, VA will furnish the flag to a friend making request for it. For those VA national cemeteries with an Avenue of Flags, families of veterans buried in these national cemeteries may donate the burial flags of their loved ones to be flown on patriotic holidays.

How Can You Apply?

You may apply for the flag by completing [VA Form 21-2008, Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes](#). You may get a flag at any VA regional office or U.S. Post Office. Generally, the funeral director will help you obtain the flag.

Can a Burial Flag Be Replaced?

The law allows us to issue one flag for a veteran's funeral. We cannot replace it if it is lost, destroyed, or stolen. However, some veterans' organizations or other community groups may be able to help you get another flag.

How Should the Burial Flag Be Displayed?

The proper way to display the flag depends upon whether the casket is open or closed. VA Form 21-2008 provides the correct method for displaying and folding the flag. The burial flag is not suitable for outside display because of its size and fabric. It is made of cotton and can easily be damaged by weather.

For More Information Call Toll-Free at 1-800-827-1000

Burial in a Private Cemetery

You may want to ask the following questions when preparing for burial in a private cemetery:

- When responding to an offer of a "free" gravesite for veterans, ask if there is a requirement to purchase an additional gravesite.
- If an additional gravesite is required, where will it be located and what is the cost?
- What type of trust fund does the cemetery have to protect buyers?
- Ask if there are restrictions on the type of headstone or marker that can be used to mark the grave.
- Does the cemetery require a special marker base to be purchased prior to ordering a free government marker for a veteran's grave?
- Is there an additional cost for the placement, setting or care of a free government headstone or marker? Is it more than if a private headstone or marker is purchased?
- Is an outside container (usually called a "vault" or "grave liner") required and how much does it cost?
- Know what you are receiving and what is required by the company and have them put it in writing prior to burial.

We suggest that if burial will be in a private cemetery and a Government headstone or marker will be requested for the veteran's grave, that the family complete, in advance, [VA Form 40-1330, Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veterans' Cemetery](#), and place it with the veteran's military discharge papers for use at the time of need.

Only an eligible veteran may receive a Government-furnished headstone or marker for placement in a private cemetery. Veteran's spouses and dependent children are not eligible.

Presidential Memorial Certificates

A Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) is an engraved paper certificate, signed by the current President, to honor the memory of honorably discharged deceased veterans.

History

This program was initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy and has been continued by all subsequent Presidents. Statutory authority for the program is Section 112, Title 38, of the United States Code.



Administration

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) administers the PMC program by preparing the certificates which bear the current President's signature expressing the country's grateful recognition of the veteran's service in the United States Armed Forces.

Eligibility

Eligible recipients include the next of kin and loved ones of honorably discharged deceased veterans. More than one certificate may be provided.

Application

Eligible recipients, or someone acting on their behalf, may apply for a PMC in person at any VA regional office or by U.S. mail or toll-free fax. Requests cannot be sent via email. Please be sure to enclose a copy of the veteran's discharge and death certificate to verify eligibility, as we cannot process any request without proof of honorable military service. Please submit copies only, as we will not return original documents.

If you would like to apply for a Presidential Memorial Certificate, or if you requested one more than eight (8) weeks ago and have not received it yet, we ask that you complete the application and submit it to us.

[VA Form 40-0247 Application for Presidential Memorial Certificate](#) (pdf file)

To read PDF documents, you need a PDF viewer. You can download a free copy of [Acrobat Reader](#).

If you have any questions about a certificate you have received, a request you have already sent in, or about the program in general, please use the "Contact the VA" link below.

Veteran Service Officers and Funeral Homes - Please contact us via e-mail at pmc@va.gov for information about submitting requests electronically.

We do not administer other VA programs or have access to other VA records. For assistance with other VA benefits or records please use the "Contact the VA" link below. Or call your Regional office at:

1-800-827-1000

Military Funeral Honors

Military Funeral Honors
"Honoring Those Who Served"

The Department of Defense (DOD) is responsible for providing military funeral honors. "Honoring Those Who Served" is the title of the DOD program for providing dignified military funeral honors to veterans who have defended our nation.

Upon the family's request, Public Law 106-65 requires that every eligible veteran receive a military funeral honors ceremony, to include folding and presenting the United States burial flag and the playing of Taps. The law defines a military funeral honors detail as consisting of two or more uniformed military persons, with at least one being a member of the veteran's parent service of the armed forces. The DOD program calls for funeral home directors to request military funeral honors on behalf of the veterans' family. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration cemetery staff can also assist with arranging military funeral honors at VA national cemeteries. Veterans organizations may assist in providing military funeral honors. When military funeral honors at a national cemetery are desired, they are arranged prior to the committal service by the funeral home.

The Department of Defense began the implementation plan for providing military funeral honors for eligible veterans as enacted in Section 578 of Public Law 106-65 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2000 on Jan. 1, 2000.

Questions or comments concerning the DOD military funeral honors program may be sent to the address listed below. The military funeral honors Web site is located at www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil.

Department of Defense
Directorate for Public Inquiry and Analysis
Room 3A750, The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

To arrange military funeral honors, contact your local funeral home.