

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

National Cemetery Administration

Arranging Burial in a VA National Cemetery

- Burial in a national cemetery is open to all members of the armed forces and Veterans who have met minimum active duty service requirements and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Their spouse, widow or widower, minor children, and, under certain conditions, unmarried adult children with disabilities, may also be eligible for burial. Eligible spouses and children may be buried even if they predecease the Veteran. Members of the reserve components of the armed forces who die while on active duty or while performing training duty, or were eligible for retired pay, may also be eligible for burial.
- Gravesites in Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries cannot be reserved in advance. However, families are encouraged to prepare in advance by discussing cemetery options and setting aside copies of any discharge documents.
- VA will provide – at no cost to the Veteran’s family – a gravesite, headstone or marker, Presidential Memorial Certificate, U.S. flag, perpetual care of the gravesite and will open and close the grave. Fees for services provided by funeral directors and other related costs must be paid for by the Veteran's family.
- VA's Veterans Benefits Administration pays a burial and plot allowance for those Veterans who are eligible by law. For information, please contact the nearest VA regional office at 1-800-827-1000. <http://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/burials/Burial.pdf>.
- To establish eligibility for burial in a VA national cemetery, the family should provide: the Veteran's discharge document; report of casualty; or the Veteran's full name; military rank; branch of service; dates of entry and discharge; serial, Social Security, and/or VA claim numbers; date and place of birth; and date of death.
- If the discharge document is not available, a copy may be obtained from the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records Office, 1 Archives Drive, St. Louis, MO 63138. This should be done prior to the time of need. Additional information about requesting military personnel records is available at the National Archives Website, www.archives.gov.

- At the time of need, a funeral director or the next of kin should contact the National Cemetery Scheduling Office. Fax all discharge documentation to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 1-866-900-6417 and follow-up with a phone call to 1-800-535-1117. It is important to have all eligibility documentation available prior to calling the Scheduling Office.
- If you have no eligibility documentation, Scheduling Office agents will assist you with the verification process. Requests for eligibility determination when no military discharge documents are available may require 48 hours or more for verification. Scheduling Office personnel will contact you within 48 hours of the initial process with verification results or an explanation of the delay.
- The same procedures should be followed to determine the eligibility of a Veteran's spouse or dependent. In most cases, one gravesite is provided for the burial of all eligible family members, marked by a single headstone or marker. When both spouses are Veterans, two adjacent 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 Veteran's family. Veterans' organizations may assist in providing military funeral honors. Additional information is available on the Internet by visiting www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil.
- Formal funeral services are not held at national cemeteries, but a final committal service may be performed at the cemetery. For safety reasons, these services are held in committal shelters located away from the gravesite. Burial will take place following the committal service. Immediate family members may be allowed to witness the interment only if arrangements have been made in advance with the cemetery director.
- National cemeteries do not normally conduct burials on weekends or federal holidays. However, weekend callers may schedule burials for the upcoming week.
- A limited number of floral arrangements may accompany the casket or urn and will be placed on the grave after burial. Floral arrangements are removed at a later date in accordance with VA's Floral/Grounds Policy.

