

**RECEIPT AND INSPECTION OF GOVERNMENT-FURNISHED
HEADSTONES/MARKERS AT VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES**

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This change rescinds specific procedures previously stated for receipt and inspection of blank niche covers at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemeteries. **NOTE:** *Unless otherwise specified, the term ‘headstone/marker’ includes all types and styles of Government-furnished headstones, markers, niche covers, niche markers, and memorial wall markers.*

2. SUMMARY OF CHANGES: New procedures related to receipt and inspection of blank niche covers and memorial wall markers at VA national cemeteries have been published in NCA Notice 2012-01. This change rescinds the paragraphs in this handbook related to outdated procedures and revises one paragraph to clarify cemetery staff action.

NOTE: *Revised information is noted by a line in the left margin; deleted entries are noted by strikethrough, explanatory text, and a line in the left margin.*

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: National Cemetery Administration, Memorial Programs Service, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for the material contained in this handbook.

4. RELATED NCA PUBLICATIONS:

- a. NCA Directive 3000 – Operational Standards for VA National Cemeteries (January 5, 2010)
- b. NCA Directive 3210/1 – Eligibility Requirements (January 18, 2011)
- c. NCA Handbook 3305 – Types and Styles of Government-Furnished Headstones/Markers (November 10, 2011)
- d. NCA Handbook 3315 – NCA Procedures for Ordering Government-Furnished Headstones/Markers (August 14, 2009)
- e. NCA Notice 2004-06 – Headstone/Marker Replacement) (December 21, 2004)
- f. NCA Policy Letter, Use of Marble Upright Headstones at Newly Established National Cemeteries (August 30, 2002)
- g. Automated Monument Application System (AMAS) User Guides
- h. Burial Operations Support System (BOSS) User Guides

5. RESCISSIONS: National Cemetery Administration Handbook 3320 - Receipt and Inspection of Government-Furnished Headstones/Markers, dated August 14, 2009:

- a. Page 3 - Section III, paragraph 2 (deleted in its entirety)

b. Page 4 - Section III, subparagraph 3.a.(3) (revised)

c. Page 10 - Section IV, subparagraphs 1.e.(1) and (2) (deleted in their entirety)

6. RECERTIFICATION: This handbook is scheduled for complete review/recertification in August 2012.

/s/
Steve L. Muro
Under Secretary
for Memorial Affairs

Distribution: Electronic

**RECEIPT AND INSPECTION OF GOVERNMENT-FURNISHED
HEADSTONES/MARKERS AT VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES**

SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

- 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE 1
- 2. BACKGROUND 1

SECTION II – TEMPORARY STORAGE 2

SECTION III – RECEIPT

- 1. DOCUMENTATION 3
- 2. BLANK GRANITE OR MARBLE NICHE COVERS..... 3
- 3. BLANK GRANITE OR MARBLE NICHE COVERS (FOR USE WITH
THE ON-SITE INSCRIPTION OF BLANKS PROGRAM) 4
- 4. INSCRIBED HEADSTONES/MARKERS (FOB ORIGIN CONTRACTS ONLY –
GBL OR CBL PROVIDED BY DRIVER) 5
- 5. INSCRIBED HEADSTONES/MARKERS/NICHE COVERS (FOB DESTINATION
CONTRACTS ONLY – LOCAL INSCRIPTION PROGRAM OR NICHE INSCRIPTIONS)) 6
- 6. INSCRIBED HEADSTONES/MARKERS (FOB DESTINATION CONTRACTS
ONLY – ON-SITE INSCRIPTION OF BLANKS PROGRAM)) 7
- 7. REVERSE INSCRIPTIONS 8

SECTION IV – INSPECTION

- 1. DAMAGE 10
- 2. QUALITY..... 10
- 3. INSCRIPTION ACCURACY..... 11

SECTION V – REPORTING PROBLEMS/MAKING CLAIMS

- 1. PROBLEMS WITH DELIVERIES UNDER LOCAL INSCRIPTION PROGRAM (LIP)
CONTRACTS..... 12
- 2. PROBLEMS WITH OTHER DELIVERIES 12
- 3. CLAIMS PROCEDURES 12

SECTION VI – PROGRAM/POSITION FUNCTIONS

- 1. UNDER SECRETARY FOR MEMORIAL AFFAIRS 13
- 2. DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR MEMORIAL AFFAIRS..... 13
- 3. OFFICE OF FINANCE AND PLANNING 13
- 4. OFFICE OF FIELD PROGRAMS..... 13
- 5. MEMORIAL PROGRAMS SERVICE (MPS) 13
- 6. CHIEF, MPS OPERATIONS OFFICE..... 13
- 7. SUPERVISOR, MPS PROGRAM SUPPORT UNIT 14
- 8. MEMORIAL SERVICE NETWORK..... 14
- 9. NCA CEMETERY DIRECTOR..... 14
- 10. QUANTICO REGIONAL PROCESSING CENTER..... 14
- 11. CENTRALIZED CONTRACTING DIVISION..... 14

APPENDIX A – HEADSTONE/MARKER/NICHE COVER SPECIFICATIONS AND
INSPECTION QUALITY CHECKLIST A-1

APPENDIX B – TRANSFER OF GOVERNMENT-FURNISHED HEADSTONES,
MARKERS, OR NICHE COVERS B-1

APPENDIX C – COMPLETION OF INSCRIPTION SERVICE(S)..... C-1

SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

a. The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) administers the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) headstone/marker program, furnishing Government headstones/markers to mark the final resting place or to commemorate the memory of an eligible veteran or group of veterans, except for those interred in cemeteries administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission. Headstones/markers furnished for eligible spouse/dependent(s) may be placed only in a Federally-administered national or State veterans cemetery.

b. This handbook describes the procedures and criteria used by NCA staff when receiving and inspecting Government-furnished headstones/markers (including flats, uprights, 6"x6" unknowns, niche covers, and niche markers) received at VA national cemeteries.

c. The statutory authorities for the policies contained in this handbook are found in title 38, United States Code, section 2306 and chapter 24. Implementing regulations are published in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, part 38.

d. Any variance from the policies or procedures expressed in this handbook must be approved in writing by the Director, Memorial Programs Service (MPS).

2. BACKGROUND

a. At VA national cemeteries, the Cemetery Director is responsible for ensuring inspection of Government-furnished headstones/markers for damage, quality, and inscription accuracy in accordance with the procedures specified below.

b. MPS Program Support Unit (PSU) (email MPSProgSupport@va.gov) will handle any problems reported by VA national cemeteries, Federally-administered national cemeteries, and State veterans cemeteries. MPS Applicant Assistance Division (1-800-697-6947) will handle any problems reported by applicants/consignees at other cemeteries.

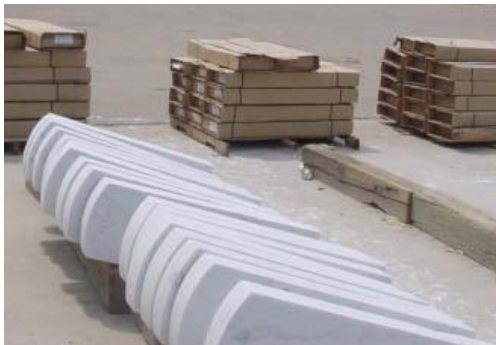
c. MPS PSU is responsible for collecting data regarding headstone/marker quality; inscription quality and accuracy; and for filing damage claims for reimbursement for all headstones/markers ordered under existing contracts.

SECTION II – TEMPORARY STORAGE

a. NCA's goal is to set permanent headstones/markers in VA national cemeteries within 60 calendar days of the interment. Ideally, headstones/markers will be set within 10 workdays of receipt/inspection/acceptance.

b. If there is a need to temporarily store accepted headstones/markers before installation, the items should be kept in a secure area such as the maintenance yard. The items should be kept inside buildings if possible, or, if stored outdoors, they should be covered for protection from the weather to avoid damage or staining from packing materials. Because of their small size and value, bronze markers should be stored inside a building that is locked during off-duty hours. (Once the bronze plaques have been attached to concrete bases, they can be stored in the maintenance yard.)

c. Headstones/markers should be stored with the long side parallel to the ground. If necessary, headstones may be stored resting on the bottom edge and leaning against a wall or other substantial support at a safe and stable angle.



Standard upright headstones stored correctly



Flat markers stored correctly

SECTION III – RECEIPT

1. DOCUMENTATION

a. All headstones and markers delivered under Free On Board (FOB) origin terms¹ will include a Government Bill of Lading (GBL) or a Commercial Bill of Lading (CBL). The cemetery will maintain the GBL or CBL with associated Monument Order Acknowledgement Receipt (MOAR) files.

b. When headstones/markers or niche covers are delivered under FOB destination terms² (e.g., inscribed headstones are received at the cemetery from a shipping company, or blank niche covers are picked up from the cemetery by a VA contractor for inscription) a GBL or CBL is not required. In lieu of a GBL or CBL, cemetery staff will complete either Appendix B (Transfer of Government-Furnished Headstones, Markers, or Niche Covers) or Appendix C (Completion of Inscription Service(s)) as prescribed in this section.

PARAGRAPH 2 AND ALL SUBPARAGRAPHS ARE DELETED IN THEIR ENTIRETY
 [Section III paragraphs will be renumbered with next publication of complete handbook]

~~2. BLANK GRANITE OR MARBLE NICHE COVERS~~

~~— a. When a shipment of blank granite or marble niche covers is delivered to a VA national cemetery:~~

~~— (1) The contractor or representative (e.g., delivery driver) will complete the top portion of Appendix B, and cemetery staff will complete the bottom portion. A copy of the completed Appendix B will be maintained with associated MOAR files. **NOTE:** A signature by cemetery staff on Appendix B does not denote acceptance of damage or approval of quality, but only that the quantity of items delivered matches Appendix B.~~

~~— (2) Before the driver leaves the cemetery, a visual inspection of the shipment and any packing materials should be made to note any obvious damage to any item (see Section IV, paragraph 1). Any item(s) with obvious damage will be refused by cemetery staff and immediately reloaded on the delivery vehicle.~~

~~— (3) Accepted shipments will be completely unpacked, counted and inspected for damage within 10 calendar days after receipt.~~

~~**NOTE:** Most blank niche covers are shipped in very large volumes and it may not be possible for cemetery staff to inspect each blank niche cover. When the size of a shipment does not allow inspection of each item, cemetery staff will perform spot checks on at least 10 percent of the niche covers in accordance with Appendix A "Headstone/Marker/Niche Cover Specifications and Inspection Quality Checklist."~~

¹ Contractor completes order with loading of inscribed headstone/marker(s) onto a transportation vehicle at the contractor's facility. A separate contract with a transportation company covers headstone/marker delivery.

² Contractor completes order when headstone/marker(s) is/are delivered to cemetery, or when existing headstone/marker or niche cover located at the cemetery has been inscribed.

PARAGRAPH 2 AND ALL SUBPARAGRAPHS ARE DELETED IN THEIR ENTIRETY
[Section III paragraphs will be renumbered with next publication of complete handbook]

~~(4) Since the contractor is responsible for transportation costs on blank granite/marble niche cover contracts, after the shipment has been inspected, cemetery staff will notify MPS PSU of the general condition of the niche covers no later than 10 calendar days after receipt of the shipment. If more than 10 percent of the shipment is deemed unacceptable, photographs (digital preferred) will be provided to MPS PSU. That office will determine appropriate action.~~

~~b. When blank niche covers are picked up from a cemetery, cemetery staff will complete the top portion of Appendix B and obtain a signature from the contractor or the contractor's representative (e.g., delivery driver). A copy of the completed Appendix B will be retained with associated MOAR files.~~

3. BLANK GRANITE OR MARBLE HEADSTONES (FOR USE WITH THE ON-SITE INSCRIPTION OF BLANKS PROGRAM)

a. When a shipment of blank granite or marble headstones is delivered to a VA national cemetery:

(1) The contractor (or representative) will complete the top portion of Appendix B, and cemetery staff will complete the bottom portion. A copy of the completed Appendix B will be retained with the cemetery Contracting Officer's Technical Representative inspection files.

NOTE: A signature by cemetery staff on Appendix B does not denote acceptance of damage, or approval of quality or inscription accuracy, but only that the quantity of items delivered matches Appendix B.

(2) Before the driver leaves the cemetery, a visual inspection of the shipment and any packing materials will be made to note any obvious damage to any item (see Section IV, paragraph 1). Any item(s) with obvious damage will be refused by cemetery staff and immediately reloaded on the delivery vehicle.

(3) Accepted shipments will be completely unpacked, counted and inspected [by cemetery staff](#) for damage [and quality](#) within 10 calendar days after receipt.

NOTE: Most blank headstones are shipped in very large volumes and it may not be possible for cemetery staff to inspect each blank headstone. When the size of a shipment does not allow inspection of each item, cemetery staff will perform spot checks on at least 10 percent of the headstones in accordance with Appendix A "Headstone/Marker/Niche Cover Specifications and Inspection Quality Checklist."

(4) Since the contractor is responsible for transportation costs on blank granite/marble headstones, after the shipment has been inspected, cemetery staff will notify MPS PSU of the general condition of the headstones no later than 10 calendar days after receipt of the shipment. If more than 10 percent of the shipment is deemed unacceptable, photographs (digital preferred) will be provided to MPS PSU. That office will determine appropriate action.

4. INSCRIBED HEADSTONES/MARKERS (FOB ORIGIN CONTRACTS ONLY – GBL OR CBL PROVIDED BY DRIVER)

a. As soon as a shipment of inscribed headstones/markers (to include stone or bronze; flats, uprights, or niche covers) is received, and before the delivery driver leaves the cemetery:

(1) A physical count will be made to ensure that each item noted on the delivery receipt is accounted for (the driver will be notified of any missing items and the delivery receipt marked appropriately); and

(2) A visual inspection of the shipment and any packing materials will be made to note any obvious damage to any item (see Section IV, paragraph 1). Any inscribed headstone/ marker with obvious damage will be refused by the cemetery and immediately reloaded on the delivery vehicle.

NOTE: *A signature by cemetery staff on the delivery receipt does not denote acceptance of damage, or approval of quality or inscription accuracy, but only that the quantity of items delivered matches the delivery receipt.*

b. Accepted headstones/markers will be completely unpacked within 2 business days of delivery, and each item inspected for damage, quality and inscription accuracy (see Section IV).

c. If an item needs to be replaced **for any reason**, cemetery staff must reorder the inscribed headstone/marker/niche cover through the Burial Operations Support System (BOSS) within 2 business days after receipt of the shipment. The appropriate replacement reason, error, and expense codes (see NCA Notice 2004-06 – Headstone/Marker Replacement) will be recorded in the replacement record.

d. The original of an item waiting to be replaced will be destroyed and properly disposed of when the replacement is received. **NOTE:** *The Cemetery Director will have an established Standard Operating Procedure that specifies what to do with the original item until the replacement is received. Possible options include keeping a temporary marker at the gravesite and storing the item to be replaced in the maintenance area, setting the original received item (with a temporary marker), or contacting the family and giving them the option of setting the item while waiting for a replacement.*

e. The date of receipt of each inscribed headstone, marker or niche cover will be entered into BOSS using the “Monument Maintenance” menu. This information will be recorded in BOSS as soon as possible, but not later than 10 calendar days after receipt of the shipment.

(1) The “Date Received” entered into BOSS must be the same date that the shipment arrived and the delivery receipt was signed at the cemetery. (If an item was refused upon delivery for obvious damage, or it was discovered later that the item was inscribed incorrectly, had concealed damage, or did not pass the quality inspection, the “Date Received” entry will be left blank until the replacement item is received.)

(2) MPS uses this information to verify the accuracy of invoices received from contractors before certifying them for payment. This also ensures valid data is collected and reported for timely marking of graves.

5. INSCRIBED HEADSTONES/MARKERS/NICHE COVERS (FOB DESTINATION CONTRACTS ONLY – LOCAL INSCRIPTION PROGRAM OR NICHE INSCRIPTIONS)

a. As soon as a shipment of inscribed headstones/markers/niche covers is received and before the delivery driver leaves the cemetery:

(1) The contractor will complete the top portion of Appendix B, and the cemetery will complete the bottom portion. A copy of the completed Appendix B will be retained with associated MOAR files. **NOTE:** *A signature by cemetery staff on Appendix B does not denote acceptance of damage, or approval of quality or inscription accuracy, but only that the quantity of items delivered matches Appendix B.*

(2) A physical count will be made to ensure that each item noted on Appendix B is accounted for (the driver will be notified of any missing items and Appendix B marked appropriately).

(3) A visual inspection of the shipment and any packing materials will be made to note any obvious damage to any item (see Section IV, paragraph 1). Any inscribed headstone/ marker/niche cover with obvious damage will be refused by cemetery staff and immediately reloaded on the delivery vehicle.

b. Accepted headstones/markers/niche covers will be completely unpacked within 2 business days of delivery, and each item inspected for damage, quality, and inscription accuracy (see Section IV).

c. If an item needs to be replaced **for any reason**, cemetery staff must reorder the inscribed headstone/marker/niche cover through the Burial Operations Support System (BOSS) within 2 business days after receipt of the shipment. The appropriate replacement reason, error, and expense codes (see NCA Notice 2004-06 – Headstone/Marker Replacement) will be recorded in the replacement record.

d. The original of an item waiting to be replaced will be destroyed and properly disposed of when the replacement is received. **NOTE:** *The Cemetery Director will have an established Standard Operating Procedure that specifies what to do with the original item until the replacement is received. Possible options include keeping a temporary marker at the gravesite and storing the item to be replaced in the maintenance area, setting the original received item (with a temporary marker noting correction to be made), or contacting the family and giving them the option of setting the item while waiting for a replacement.*

e. The date of receipt for each inscribed headstone, marker or niche cover will be entered into BOSS as recorded on Appendix B, using the “Monument Maintenance” menu. This information should be recorded in BOSS as soon as possible, but no later than 10 calendar days after receipt of the shipment.

(1) The “Date Received” entered into BOSS must be the same date that the shipment arrived and Appendix B was signed at the cemetery. (If an item was refused upon delivery for obvious damage, or it was discovered later that the item was inscribed incorrectly, had concealed damage, or did not pass the quality inspection, the “Date Received” entry will be left blank until the replacement item is received.)

(2) MPS uses this information to verify the accuracy of invoices received from contractors before certifying the invoices for payment. This also ensures valid data is collected and reported for timely marking of graves.

6. INSCRIBED HEADSTONES/MARKERS (FOB DESTINATION CONTRACTS ONLY – ON-SITE INSCRIPTION OF BLANKS PROGRAM)

a. When a contractor is inscribing blank headstones/markers on-site, cemetery staff will ensure that prior to the contractor departing at the end of the day:

(1) The contractor completes the top portion of Appendix C, and cemetery staff complete the bottom portion. A copy of the completed Appendix C will be retained with associated MOAR files. **NOTE:** *A signature by cemetery staff on Appendix C does not denote acceptance of damage, or approval of quality or inscription accuracy, but only that the quantity of inscribed headstones matches Appendix C.*

(2) Prior to completing Appendix C, cemetery staff will make a physical count to ensure that each item noted is accounted for; and visually inspect each headstone/marker to note any obvious damage to any item (see Section IV, paragraph 1). Any headstone/marker damaged during inscription will be refused by the cemetery and immediately annotated on Appendix C. Cemetery staff will order a replacement (see paragraph 6.c. below) and properly dispose of the damaged item.

b. Accepted headstones will be completely inspected for damage, quality, and inscription accuracy (see Section IV) within 2 business days after acceptance.

c. If an item needs to be replaced **for any reason**, cemetery staff must reorder the inscribed headstone through BOSS within 2 business days after receipt of the headstone. The appropriate replacement reason, error, and expense codes (see NCA Notice 2004-06 – Headstone/Marker Replacement) will be recorded in the replacement record.

d. The original of an item waiting to be replaced will be destroyed and properly disposed of when the replacement is received. **NOTE:** *The Cemetery Director will have an established Standard Operating Procedure that specifies what to do with the original item until the replacement is received. Possible options include keeping a temporary marker at the gravesite and storing the item to be replaced in the maintenance area, setting the original received item (with a temporary marker noting correction to be made), or contacting the family and giving them the option of setting the item while waiting for a replacement.*

e. The date of receipt for each inscribed headstone, marker or niche cover will be entered into BOSS, as recorded on Appendix C, using the “Monument Maintenance” menu. This information will be recorded in BOSS as soon as possible, but no later than 10 calendar days after receipt of the shipment.

(1) The “Date Received” entered into BOSS must be the same date that the shipment arrived and Appendix C was signed at the cemetery. (If an item was refused upon delivery for obvious damage, or it was discovered later that the item was inscribed incorrectly, had concealed damage, or did not pass the quality inspection, the “Date Received” entry will be left blank until the replacement item is received.)

(2) MPS uses this information to verify the accuracy of invoices received from contractors before certifying the invoices for payment. This also ensures valid data is collected and reported for timely marking of graves.

7. REVERSE INSCRIPTIONS (R2)

a. When a contractor is doing R2 inscriptions on-site, cemetery staff will ensure that as soon as the R2 orders have been completed, and prior to the contractor departing at the end of the day:

(1) The contractor will complete the top portion of Appendix C, and cemetery staff will complete the bottom portion. A copy of the completed Appendix C will be retained with associated MOAR files. **NOTE:** *A signature by cemetery staff on Appendix C does not denote acceptance of damage, or approval of quality or inscription accuracy, but only that the quantity of inscribed headstones matches Appendix C.*

(2) Prior to completing Appendix C, cemetery staff will make a physical count to ensure that each item noted is accounted for; and visually inspect each headstone to note any obvious damage to any item (see Section IV, paragraph 1). Any headstone/marker damaged during inscription will be refused by the cemetery and immediately annotated on Appendix C. Cemetery staff will order a replacement (see paragraph 7.c. below) and properly dispose of the damaged headstone/marker.

b. Accepted headstones will be completely inspected for damage, quality, and inscription accuracy (see Section IV) within 2 business days after acceptance.

c. If an item needs to be replaced **for any reason**, cemetery staff must reorder the inscribed headstone through BOSS within 2 business days after receipt of the headstone. The appropriate replacement reason, error, and expense codes (see NCA Notice 2004-06 – Headstone/Marker Replacement) will be recorded in the replacement record.

d. The original of an item waiting to be replaced will be destroyed and properly disposed of when the replacement is received. **NOTE:** *The Cemetery Director will have an established Standard Operating Procedure that specifies what to do with the original item until the replacement is received. Possible options include keeping a temporary marker at the gravesite and storing the item to be replaced in the maintenance area, setting the original received item (with a temporary marker noting correction to be made), or contacting the family and giving them the option of setting the item while waiting for a replacement.*

e. The date of receipt for each inscribed headstone, marker or niche cover will be entered into BOSS, as recorded on Appendix C, using the “Monument Maintenance” menu. This information will be recorded in BOSS as soon as possible, but no later than 10 calendar days after receipt of the shipment.

(1) The “Date Received” entered into BOSS must be the same date that the shipment arrived and Appendix C was signed at the cemetery. (If an item was refused upon delivery for obvious damage, or it was discovered later that the item was inscribed incorrectly, had concealed damage, or did not pass the quality inspection, the “Date Received” entry will be left blank until the replacement item is received.)

(2) MPS uses this information to verify the accuracy of invoices received from contractors before certifying the invoices for payment. This also ensures valid data is collected and reported for timely marking of graves.

SECTION IV – INSPECTION

1. DAMAGE

a. During the initial receipt and inspection, any obvious damage to shipped items will be noted on the delivery receipt while the driver is present at the delivery point, and such items immediately reloaded on the vehicle.

b. The delivery receipt will be annotated to show the number of items refused due to damage, with identifying information such as the last name of the veteran, and section and grave number. The driver should sign the delivery receipt to acknowledge any refused items and the reason. If more than one item is damaged, the delivery receipt will be clearly marked to note quantities, for example, “8 damaged/refused headstones.”

c. A copy of the annotated delivery receipt will be kept at the cemetery. When possible, the original shipping container and additional packing material will not be destroyed until the cemetery staff have completed an inspection of the entire shipment.

d. If a complete physical inspection of all headstones/markers is not possible at the time of delivery, cemetery staff have 2 business days to completely unpack the shipment and inspect each item for damage.

(1) Any damaged item will be handled in accordance with established cemetery standard operating procedures, and the original item destroyed (stone) or returned to the manufacturer (bronze) when the replacement is received.

(2) Damage discovered after delivery must be reported to MPS PSU no later than 10 calendar days after receipt of the shipment. The damage will be documented by photographs (digital preferred).

PARAGRAPH 1.e. AND ALL SUBPARAGRAPHS ARE DELETED IN THEIR ENTIRETY

~~e. If a complete physical inspection of blank niche covers is not possible at the time of delivery, cemetery staff have 10 business days to perform spot checks on at least 10 percent of the shipment in accordance with Appendix A – Headstone/Marker/Niche Cover Specifications and Inspection Quality Checklist.~~

~~(1) Any damaged niche cover will be handled in accordance with established cemetery standard operating procedures, and the original item destroyed when the replacement is received.~~

~~(2) If more than 10 percent of the shipment is deemed unacceptable, photographs (digital preferred) will be provided to MPS PSU.~~

2. QUALITY

a. Each inscribed headstone, marker, or niche cover and inscription service contract has a Statement of Work (SOW) that describes the specifications for manufacturing and inscribing a headstone, marker, or niche cover. These specifications vary depending on the type, style and size of the headstone, marker or niche cover. The specifications may change as new contracts are awarded or existing contracts are amended.

b. The current SOW specifications for all contracts and guidelines for conducting a quality inspection are included in Appendix A “Headstone/Marker/Niche Cover Specifications and Inspection Quality Checklist.” This checklist will be used when inspecting new deliveries of headstones/markers and new inscriptions on existing headstones, markers or niche covers.

c. An item found to be of poor quality after the initial inspection period will be handled in accordance with established cemetery standard operating procedures, and the original item destroyed when the replacement is received.

3. INSCRIPTION ACCURACY

a. Inscription accuracy will be verified by comparing each line of the completed inscription to the Monument Order Acknowledgement Receipt.

b. An item being held for a replacement will be handled in accordance with established cemetery standard operating procedures, and the original item destroyed when the replacement is received.

SECTION V – REPORTING PROBLEMS/MAKING CLAIMS

1. PROBLEMS WITH DELIVERIES UNDER LOCAL INSCRIPTION PROGRAM (LIP) CONTRACTS

a. Since LIP contractors are responsible for transportation costs, cemetery staff will inspect all items upon delivery and notify MPS PSU as soon as they discover a headstone or marker is damaged or an item is missing from a shipment, but no later than 2 business days after receiving the shipment.

b. A photograph of each damaged headstone/marker will be sent to MPS PSU – an email message to MPSProgSupport@va.gov with a digital photograph attached is recommended.

c. Damage that is not immediately apparent at the time of delivery, but is discovered later, must be reported to MPS PSU no later than 10 calendar days after receipt of the shipment.

d. MPS PSU will also be notified within 10 calendar days of any items received in error.

2. PROBLEMS WITH OTHER DELIVERIES

a. A copy of the annotated delivery receipt will be provided to MPS PSU if any items are refused during initial delivery inspection.

b. Cemetery staff have 2 business days to thoroughly inspect the entire shipment of inscribed headstones, markers, or niche covers. If an item must be replaced, cemetery staff will report the details to MPS PSU no later than 10 calendar days after receipt of the shipment. The report should include:

(1) Delivery order number, shipment number, BOSS Microfilm ID number, name of veteran, and a brief description of the problem; and

(2) A photograph (digital preferred) that clearly shows the poor quality, damage, or inscription error.

3. CLAIMS PROCEDURES

a. VA is required to provide supporting documentation to make claims against carriers for headstones/markers that are damaged or lost during shipment. This documentation must include the delivery receipt that notes the damage or missing items and was signed by the delivery driver, and any other information provided by the cemetery.

b. When MPS PSU receives timely notification of a problem (including complete supporting documentation), that office is responsible for taking necessary action to file a claim against the contractor or carrier. When problems are reported promptly and proper documentation is provided, claims for visible damage or missing items can usually be made against the carrier without contest.

SECTION VI – PROGRAM/POSITION FUNCTIONS

1. **Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs** oversees the VA headstone and marker program and approves policies and specifications for inscriptions on Government-furnished headstones/markers.
2. **Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs** ensures that headstone/marker program responsibilities are carried out appropriately.
3. **Office of Finance and Planning** program functions include:
 - a. Review, approval and timely obligation of funds for headstones/markers;
 - b. Ensuring that operational standards and measures align with the requirements of this handbook;
 - c. Assisting in the development and evaluation of accurate, valid and reliable data collection systems; and
 - d. Analyzing collected data to provide performance reports to responsible offices.
4. **Office of Field Programs** program functions include:
 - a. Determining the appropriate time periods for actions by cemetery staff;
 - b. Providing guidance to cemetery staff to meet operational standards related to headstones/markers as stated in NCA Directive 3000 – Operational Standards for National Cemeteries; and
 - c. Working with Memorial Service Network (MSN) and Memorial Programs Service (MPS) staff to resolve any issues associated with headstones/markers received at VA national cemeteries.
5. **Memorial Programs Service (MPS)** program functions include:
 - a. Administration of the headstone and marker program for VA, to include establishing quality guidelines and disseminating that information to field staff;
 - b. Ensuring timely and accurate provision of headstone/marker products, including the oversight of contracts for production, inscription, and transportation;
 - c. Making final determinations on requests to vary from established procedures; and
 - d. Responding to requests for information and assistance from VA or NCA staff, other Federal and/or State offices, and the general public, as required.
6. **Chief, MPS Operations Office**, monitors and reports on contractor performance through the MPS Program Support Unit.

7. **Supervisor, MPS Program Support Unit (PSU)**, position functions include:

- a. Collecting data regarding headstone, marker and niche cover quality; inscription quality and accuracy, and any problems with transportation;
- b. Filing damage claims;
- c. Serving as primary Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) for headstone/marker contracts for Federally-administered national cemeteries or State veterans cemeteries except where a Cemetery Director has COTR responsibility;
- d. Providing weekly performance reviews and reporting problems or deviations from the contract to the Chief, MPS Operations Office, and the Director, MPS; and
- e. Reporting performance issues not resolved by MPS staff to the Contracting Officer in the Centralized Contracting Division.

8. **Memorial Service Network (MSN)** program functions include:

- a. Monitoring all activities associated with headstones/markers at VA national cemeteries; and
- b. Reporting problems to the MPS Operations Office and acting as liaison between cemetery staff and MPS to address problems or questions.

9. **NCA Cemetery Director** position functions include:

- a. Arranging for timely inspection of blank niche covers and headstones/markers, and inscribed headstones/markers;
- b. Acting as Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) for headstone/marker contracts not monitored by MPS Program Support Unit;
- c. Reporting data regarding headstone, marker and niche cover quality; and inscription quality and accuracy to MPS PSU and the MSN Director (providing timely notice and supporting documentation as outlined in Sections IV and V);
- d. Reporting on performance of local inscription contractors to MSN Director and MPS PSU; and
- e. Forwarding questions about delivery times and/or quality problems to MPS PSU (with a copy to the MSN Director).

10. **Quantico Regional Processing Center**, Information Systems Service, maintains, updates and upgrades the electronic programs that support the headstone/marker program.

11. **Centralized Contracting Division (CCD)**, Management Support Service, enforces all terms and conditions of the awarded contract relating to the quality, and timely manufacture and delivery of products and services.

**APPENDIX A – HEADSTONE/MARKER/NICHE COVER SPECIFICATIONS
AND INSPECTION QUALITY CHECKLIST**

NOTE: Unless otherwise specified, the type of headstone or marker includes all styles for that specific type (i.e., Type “U” includes U1, U3, U4, U5, U6, U7, and U9).

Flat Marble Marker – Type “F” - 12” x 24” x 4”

- ✓ Size – The width, length, and thickness does not exceed a plus or minus 1/4”
- ✓ Color – Allowable predominant color as defined by the Munsell Neutral Value Scale is N8 or higher ¹
- ✓ Inscription depth ²
 - Emblem ³ – minimum 5/32” & maximum 7/32” depth
 - L1 Lettering (1 1/8”) – minimum 5/32” & maximum 7/32” depth
 - L3 Lettering (7/8”) – minimum 4/32” & maximum 5/32” depth
 - L4 Lettering (3/4”) – minimum 4/32” & maximum 5/32” depth
- ✓ Lithochrome Application ⁴ – N4 or lower as judged against the Munsell Neutral Value Scale
- ✓ Finish – The top and all sides are clean, with a smooth finish, and free of visible scratches and saw marks. All edges and corners (except bottom) are smooth. All stencil material and adhesive is completely removed and the letters are free of dust.

Upright Marble Headstone – Type “U” - 13” x 42” x 4”

- ✓ Size – The width, height, and thickness does not exceed a plus or minus 1/4”
- ✓ Color – Allowable predominant color as defined by the Munsell Neutral Value Scale is N8 or higher ¹
- ✓ Inscription depth ²
 - Emblem ³ – minimum 5/32” & maximum 7/32” depth
 - L1 Lettering (1 1/8”) – minimum 5/32” & maximum 7/32” depth
 - L3 Lettering (7/8”) – minimum 4/32” & maximum 5/32” depth
 - L4 Lettering (3/4”) – minimum 4/32” & maximum 5/32” depth
- ✓ Lithochrome Application ⁴ – N4 or lower as judged against the Munsell Neutral Value Scale
- ✓ Finish – The top and all sides are clean, with a smooth finish, and free of visible scratches and saw marks. All edges and corners (except bottom) are smooth. All stencil material and adhesive is completely removed and the letters are free of dust.

¹ MPS can provide guidance regarding any approved non-standard color/variation. Stone products may contain light to moderate veining that does not interfere with inscription legibility.

² All allowable special characters, accent marks or symbols (such as the tilde) have the same depth as the smallest lettering size used for the appropriate type and style of headstone or marker. The inscription depth is measured to the center of bevel in the letters. Inscription depth should be measured for overall consistency.

³ For the purpose of this checklist an emblem refers to any part of the inscription that is not text or integer.

⁴ Lithochrome is a dark shadowing agent applied to the incised inscription. Lithochrome will be applied in accordance with individual contract standards. The lithochrome application for Medal of Honor type headstones/markers is applied in reflective gold color. Cemetery staff will use their best judgment to determine that the proper gold shading has been applied.

Old Style Upright Marble Headstone – Types “XA” - 12” x 42” x 3,” “XB” - 13” x 42” x 3,” and “XC” – “10” x 39” x 3”

- ✓ Size – The width, height, and thickness does not exceed a plus or minus 1/4”
- ✓ Color – Allowable predominant color as defined by the Munsell Neutral Value Scale is N8 or higher ¹
- ✓ Shield – The face of the shield has a flat, smooth unpolished finish
- ✓ Edge of Lettering Inside the Shield – is beveled not less than 60 degrees
- ✓ Raised Lettering Inside the Shield – minimum 5/32” & maximum 7/32” in height
- ✓ Inscribed Lettering Below the Shield – minimum 5/32” & maximum 7/32” in depth and not lithochromed
- ✓ Finish – The top and all sides are clean, with a smooth finish, and free of visible scratches and saw marks. All edges and corners (except bottom) are smooth. All stencil material and adhesive is completely removed and the letters are free of dust.

Old Style Upright Granite Headstone – Type “YA” - 13” x 42” x 3”

- ✓ Size – The width, height, and thickness does not exceed a plus or minus 1/4”
- ✓ Color – Allowable predominant color as defined by the Munsell Neutral Value Scale is N6 or higher ¹
- ✓ Shield – The face of the shield has a flat, smooth unpolished finish
- ✓ Edge of Lettering Inside the Shield – is beveled not less than 60 degrees
- ✓ Raised Lettering Inside the Shield – minimum 5/32” & maximum 7/32” in height
- ✓ Inscribed Lettering Below the Shield – minimum 5/32” & maximum 7/32” in depth and not lithochromed
- ✓ Finish – The top and all sides are clean, with a smooth finish, and free of visible scratches and saw marks. All edges and corners (except bottom) are smooth. All stencil material and adhesive is completely removed and the letters are free of dust.

Flat Granite Marker – Types “G” - 12” x 24” x 4”, “J” - 12” x 24” x 3” and “L” - 12” x 18” x 3”

- ✓ Size – The width, length, and thickness does not exceed a plus or minus 1/4”
- ✓ Color – Allowable predominant color as defined by the Munsell Neutral Value Scale is N6 or higher ¹
- ✓ Inscription depth ²
 - Emblem ³ – minimum 7/32” & maximum 9/32”
 - L1 Lettering (1 1/8”) – minimum 7/32” & maximum 9/32” depth
 - L3 Lettering (7/8”) – minimum 6/32” & maximum 7/32” depth
 - L4 Lettering (3/4”) – minimum 6/32” & maximum 7/32” depth
- ✓ Lithochrome Application ⁴ – N4 or lower as judged against the Munsell Neutral Value Scale
- ✓ Finish – The top and all sides are clean, with a smooth finish, and free of visible scratches and saw marks. All edges and corners (except bottom) are smooth. All stencil material and adhesive is completely removed and the letters are free of dust.

Upright Granite Headstone – Types “V” - 13” x 42” x 4” and “W” - 13” x 42” x 3”

- ✓ Size – The width, height, and thickness do not exceed a plus or minus 1/4”
- ✓ Color – Allowable predominant color as defined by the Munsell Neutral Value Scale is N6 or higher ¹

- ✓ Inscription depth ²
 - Emblem ³ – minimum 7/32" & maximum 9/32" depth
 - L1 Lettering (1 1/8") – minimum 7/32" & maximum 9/32" depth
 - L3 Lettering (7/8") – minimum 6/32" & maximum 7/32" depth
 - L4 Lettering (3/4") – minimum 6/32" & maximum 7/32" depth
- ✓ Lithochrome Application ⁴ – N4 or lower as judged against the Munsell Neutral Value Scale
- ✓ Finish – The top and all sides are clean, with a smooth finish, and free of visible scratches and saw marks. All edges and corners (except bottom) are smooth. All stencil material and adhesive is completely removed and the letters are free of dust.

Blank Granite Niche Cover/Blank Marble Niche Cover - 15 3/4" x 11 1/4" x 3/4"
 (Arlington National Cemetery uses only 7/8" thick marble)

- ✓ Size – The width, length, and thickness does not exceed a plus or minus 1/16"
- ✓ Granite Color – Allowable predominant color as defined by the Munsell Neutral Value Scale is N6 or higher ¹
- ✓ Marble Color – Allowable predominant color as defined by the Munsell Neutral Value Scale is N8 or higher ¹
- ✓ Finish – The face of each niche cover is clean, with a smooth finish, and free of visible scratches, saw marks and rust spots. All edges and corners are smooth sawn and finished with a clean 1/16 inch to 1/8 inch aris (eased edge). Four corner holes are core drilled in each cover. The holes on the face have smooth side walls with one centerline. The back face of the niche covers may be sawn finished or better.
- ✓ Workmanship – Each niche cover is free from spalls, chips, or cracks. The covers are free of ink, oil, dirt, and stone dust.

Granite Niche Cover with Inscription – Type "H" - 15 3/4" x 11 1/4" x 3/4"

- ✓ Inscription depth ²
 - Emblem ³ – minimum 5/32" & maximum 7/32"
 - L1 Lettering (1 1/8") – minimum 5/32" & maximum 7/32" depth
 - L2 Lettering (1") – minimum 4/32" & maximum 5/32" depth
 - L3 Lettering (7/8") – minimum 4/32" & maximum 5/32" depth
 - L4 Lettering (3/4") – minimum 4/32" & maximum 5/32" depth
- ✓ Lithochrome Application ⁴ – N4 or lower as judged against the Munsell Neutral Value Scale
- ✓ Finish – All stencil material and adhesive is completely removed and the letters are free of dust.

Marble Niche Cover with Inscription – Types "I" - 15 3/4" x 11 1/4" x 3/4" and "E" - 15 3/4" x 11 1/4" x 7/8"

- ✓ Inscription depth ²
 - Emblem ³ – minimum 5/32" & maximum 7/32" depth
 - L1 Lettering (1 1/8") – minimum 5/32" & maximum 7/32" depth
 - L2 Lettering (1") – minimum 4/32" & maximum 5/32" depth
 - L3 Lettering (7/8") – minimum 4/32" & maximum 5/32" depth
 - L4 Lettering (3/4") – minimum 4/32" & maximum 5/32" depth
- ✓ Lithochrome Application ⁴ – N4 or lower as judged against the Munsell Neutral Value Scale
- ✓ Finish – All stencil material and adhesive is completely removed and the letters are free of dust.

Flat Bronze Marker – Types “B” and “T” - 12” x 24” x ¾”

- ✓ Size – The length does not exceed a plus 1/4” or a minus 1/8” and height (rise) does not exceed a plus 1/8” or minus 1/16”.
- ✓ Color – Color is a dark brown background clear coated on the front and sides. The marker is textured, with leatherette background finish.
- ✓ All characters and emblems are cast with uniformity and have sharp edges, with the bare bronze showing under the clear coat. Border has weave finish (dark brown coating partially removed).
- ✓ Brass rods, nuts and washers are provided with each marker. Rods are fully threaded to fit the tapped bosses (threaded holes) on the reverse side of the marker.
- ✓ Finish – There is no evidence of feeding heads, gates or risers on the face, sides or ends of finished markers. Markers are free of bends or warping exceeding 1/16 inch. Casting is free of wrinkles, sand holes, blow holes, hard spots, repairs, cracks, or evidence of porous places.

Bronze Niche Marker – Type “Z” - 8 1/2” x 5 1/2” x 7/16”

- ✓ Size – The length does not exceed a plus 1/4” or a minus 1/8” and height (rise) does not exceed a plus 1/8” or minus 1/16”.
- ✓ Color – Color is a dark brown background clear coated on the front and sides. The marker has a textured, leatherette background finish.
- ✓ All characters and emblems are cast with uniformity and have sharp edges, with the bare bronze showing under the clear coat. Border also shows as bare bronze.
- ✓ Brass rods, nuts and washers are provided with each marker. Rods are fully threaded to fit the tapped bosses (threaded holes) on the reverse side of the marker.
- ✓ Finish – There is no evidence of feeding heads, gates or risers on the face, sides or ends of finished markers. Markers are free of bends or warping exceeding 1/16 inch. Casting is free of wrinkles, sand holes, blow holes, hard spots, repairs, cracks, or evidence of porous places.

Reverse (R2) Inscriptions on Existing Upright Headstones (All types)

- ✓ For inscription depths refer to appropriate granite or marble specifications on pages A-1 and A-3.
- ✓ Lithochrome Application ⁴ – N4 or lower as judged against the Munsell Neutral Value Scale. The section and grave number are also applied with the shadowing agent in order for the entire back of the headstone to have a uniform appearance. Any overspray will be removed immediately to ensure no bleed through.
- ✓ Finish – All stencil material and adhesive is completely removed from the headstone and the letters are free of dust.

**APPENDIX B – TRANSFER OF GOVERNMENT-FURNISHED HEADSTONES,
MARKERS, OR NICHE COVERS**

I certify that the headstones, markers, or niche covers specified below were transferred to the cemetery or VA contractor listed at the bottom.

Name of Cemetery or VA Contractor: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Check the appropriate box showing the type of headstone, marker or niche cover being transferred.

- Blank Marble or Granite Niche Covers Quantity: _____
- Inscribed Marble or Granite Niche Covers Quantity: _____
- Blank Marble or Granite Headstones or Markers Quantity: _____
- Inscribed Marble or Granite Headstones or Markers Quantity: _____

Shipment Number(s) (if applicable):

=====

I certify that the headstones, markers, or niche covers specified above were received by me and the quantity of items has been verified.

Name of Cemetery or VA Contractor: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C – COMPLETION OF INSCRIPTION SERVICE(S)

I certify that the inscriptions have been completed on the headstones, markers, or niche covers identified below.

Name of Contractor: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Check the appropriate box showing the type of headstone, marker or niche cover inscription completed.

Inscribed Marble/Granite Niche Covers Quantity: _____

Inscribed Marble/Granite Headstones or Markers Quantity: _____

Shipment Number (s) (if applicable):

=====

I certify that the headstones, markers, or niche covers identified above were received by me and the quantity of items has been verified.

Name of Cemetery: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____