

**NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF FIELD PROGRAMS CELL PHONE POLICY/PROCEDURES**

1. PURPOSE: To update guidance for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Office of Field Programs employees related to issuance of cell phones/ accessories, and appropriate use of such items.

2. POLICY

a. NCA has approved the issuance of cell phones to field employees whose responsibilities include frequent need for official communication while on travel and/or away from their permanent workstation.

b. **Cell phones and accessories issued to NCA employees are government property, issued for the purpose of conducting official NCA business**, e.g., contacting the home office; phoning a supervisor while in the field; coordinating a meeting with a colleague while traveling; or checking one's work voice mail while on official travel or in training.

c. Cell phones will not be used to transmit or store sensitive or Personally Identifiable Information. Cell phones (with or without hands-free capability) will not be used at all when driving a vehicle or operating Government-owned, leased or rented equipment. Cell phone use must comply with Federal, State, and VA requirements for safety, and for information security, including (but not limited) to the guidance cited below:

(1) Executive Order 13513 (October 1, 2009 - prohibits the use of electronic text messaging while driving on official business or while using Government-supplied equipment) ^{1/}

(2) VA Directive and Handbook 6500 – Information Security Program ^{2/}

(3) VA Directive 6502 - VA Enterprise Privacy Program ^{2/}

(4) VA Directive 6001 – Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment Including Information Technology ^{2/ 3/}

^{1/} See VA Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration Information Letter 006-2010-1 (available electronically at <http://vaww1.va.gov/VASAFETY> under "DASHO and HR&A Letters").

^{2/} VA directives and handbooks are available electronically at <http://www1.va.gov/vapubs/>.

^{3/} VA Directive 6001 allows employees **limited personal use** of an NCA cell phone for personal reasons (such as contacting a family member, doctor, or friend) on an irregular basis for a short conversation. (Making daily or regular calls for any reason to family members or friends under non-emergency circumstances is considered excessive personal use.) Use of the cell phone is permitted in case of an emergency, such as vehicle mechanical problems, or concern for personal safety. **NOTE: All calls made for emergency reasons must be documented in writing and the records retained by the employee for potential future inquiry.**

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. The **Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs, must approve all requests** to provide government-issued cell phones to field staff and will issue additional guidance if necessary.

b. Office of Field Programs **employees who are issued cell phones will sign a statement** acknowledging receipt of the equipment (see Attachment) and indicating agreement to comply with the policies and procedures stated in this notice in addition to VA safety and information security requirements.

c. The **managing office** (Office of Field Programs, Memorial Programs Service, Memorial Service Network, Cemetery, or MPS Processing Site, as appropriate) is responsible for the purchase, issuance, and management (including tracking, storage, review of invoices, and appropriate service deactivation for and reporting of lost or stolen devices) for NCA cell phones.

d. **Supervisors** will forward receipt/return documents signed by the employee to the managing office, as well as any returned cell phone or accessories.

e. Any **requests to make changes or additions to existing service accounts** must be submitted in writing by the appropriate supervisor in accordance with specified procedures. NCA employees are not authorized to make any changes to an NCA cell phone service account.

f. Employees are responsible for **proper and reasonable safeguarding** of NCA cell phones, and maintaining the cell phone and accessories in the condition in which they were issued (except for normal wear).

(1) Any **requests for repair** must be submitted in writing by the appropriate supervisor in accordance with the specified procedures.

(2) Any **lost or stolen phones must be reported immediately** in accordance with procedures specified in paragraph 3.g..

g. NCA cell phones and accessories must be **returned immediately to the managing office** when an employee leaves NCA employment or it is determined that the employee no longer needs a cell phone for official use.

4. PROCEDURES

a. **Requesting a New NCA Cell Phone or Cell Phone Account:**

(1) The appropriate supervisor must submit a written request (email is acceptable) through the appropriate Cemetery and/or Memorial Services Network Director, or Memorial Programs Service, to the Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs. The request must contain the designated employee name(s), position, office location, type of service plan requested, and the reason a cell phone is needed for job performance.

(2) The request can be disapproved at any point in the process. Requests submitted to the Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs will also be reviewed by the Director, Information Technology and Business Requirements Service, and the Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Finance and Planning. Final decision will be made by the Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs.

(a) If a request is approved, the managing office will purchase the cell phone(s).

(b) If the reason given is not adequate, the Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs will either deny the request or ask for additional justification.

b. Purchasing Phone/Negotiating Service Plans: All phones and service plans will be procured through a General Services Administration vendor. The managing office will purchase cell phone(s) as approved by the Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs, using local funds earmarked for telecommunications (IT). Appropriate calling plans should be negotiated by the requesting NCA office/procurement activity to cover the minimum number of minutes necessary to meet recurring business-related requirements.

c. Review of Service Plan Invoices: Managing office personnel will be responsible for reviewing and certifying monthly cell phone invoice(s). Usage significantly above the average number of minutes used by employees in the same position, repeated calls to the same phone number, significant usage before or after regular duty hours or on weekends, and/or long distance calls outside of the local calling area, will be reviewed as indicators of possible misuse. The managing office will forward any questions about NCA cell phone use to the supervisor(s) of the employee(s) with a request for an explanation from the employee. The managing office may require reimbursement for personal calls (any request for reimbursement will be made in writing).

d. Issuance/Receipt of NCA Cell Phones:

(1) Managing office personnel will notify the employee(s) designated to receive a cell phone when the equipment is ready for pick-up. The employee(s) will be issued copies of this notice and any additional Office of Field Programs guidance. The employee(s) will be required to sign a "Record of Cell Phone Issuance/Receipt/Return" (see attachment) for receipt of the cell phone and accessories, and to certify that he/she has received, read, and understood the policy and procedures related to NCA cell phone use. A record will be completed whenever a cell phone is issued, even for temporary use.

(2) Each managing office is responsible for tracking and/or storage of cell phones purchased, issued, and/or returned for employees at that location.

e. Existing Cell Phone Service Account – Requesting a Change or Additional Service: The employee's supervisor must submit a written request (email is acceptable) through the appropriate Cemetery and/or Memorial Services Network Director, or Memorial Programs Service, to the Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs. Field Programs staff will coordinate all modifications to service accounts with the Director, Information Technology and Business Requirements Service.

f. Requesting Repair Services: Employees must inform their supervisor of damage to or problems experienced with the NCA cell phone, accessories or service plan. Supervisors must approve service requests prior to devices being returned to service providers for repairs. If the

service provider determines the cell phone cannot be repaired, a replacement cell phone will be provided in accordance with the warranty and/or service plan. In the event the device is no longer under warranty or replacement coverage is not in effect, the employee's supervisor will be consulted to determine if a replacement device is warranted. If the replacement requirement is deemed valid, it will be processed as a new request.

g. Reporting Lost or Stolen Cell Phones:

(1) If an NCA cell phone is lost or stolen, the employee must immediately notify their supervisor and the appropriate managing office, so that the managing office can notify the cell phone service provider to cancel the service within 24 hours of the loss or theft. The managing office will determine if it is necessary to report to Office of Field Programs, the NCA Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, or the VA Integrated Operations Center.

(2) If the loss or theft was a result of the employee's gross negligence or reckless conduct, the employee may be required to reimburse NCA for the cost of the phone. If the employee is not responsible for the loss, the managing office will order a replacement phone at no cost to the employee, contingent upon approval by the chain of command. Each managing office will maintain a record of all lost or stolen phones and the circumstances.

h. Returning NCA Cell Phones: NCA cell phones and accessories must be returned immediately to the managing office when an employee leaves NCA employment, or it is determined that an employee no longer needs a cell phone for official use. The employee will be required to sign a "Record of Cell Phone Issuance/Receipt/Return" (see attachment) certifying that the cell phone and accessories have been returned. The managing office will provide the employee with a copy of the final signed document.

5. RESPONSIBLE OFFICES

a. NCA, Information Technology and Business Requirements Service, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20420, is responsible for guidance related to Blackberry handheld units.

b. NCA, Office of Field Programs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for guidance related to cell phones.

6. RESCISSION: This notice rescinds NCA Notice 2007-02 - Office of Field Programs Cell Phone Policy/Procedures, as published March 29, 2007.

7. EXPIRATION: The policies and procedures contained in this notice will remain in effect until specifically rescinded by NCA formal guidance published after the date of this notice.

/s/
Glenn Powers
Deputy Under Secretary
for Field Programs

Attachment (Record of Cell Phone Issuance/Receipt/Return)

Distribution: Electronic

National Cemetery
Record of Cell Phone Issuance/Receipt/Return

To: Employee Name: _____
Cell Phone Number: _____

From: Managing Office: _____
Name: _____

Subject: Record of Cell Phone Issuance (Permanent or Temporary Use)

Date: _____

Based on your assigned work duties, you have been issued an NCA cell phone for official Government use. Therefore, your careful review of NCA Notice 2011-04 (Office of Field Programs Cell Phone Policy/Procedures) and signature on this memorandum is requested as certification that you agree and will comply with all policy and procedures governing use of this cell phone.

Please sign and return this memorandum to your supervisor when taking receipt of an NCA cell phone.

Official Use

This NCA cell phone is provided for your official use while you are employed with NCA. You must return the NCA cell phone and any accessories to your supervisor if it is determined that your position no longer requires use of an NCA cell phone. Report loss or theft of the cell phone immediately to your supervisor and the appropriate managing office. Should you resign from your NCA position, or if your employment is otherwise terminated, you must return the NCA cell phone and any accessories to your supervisor on your last day of employment.

Note: *Employees are encouraged to save the original box in which the phone was issued and the instruction manual for future use.*

Acknowledgment of Receipt

My signature below certifies that I have read and understand the NCA Notice 2011-04 and this 'record of issuance' and agree to abide by NCA policies and procedures for issuance and use of NCA cell phones.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

I understand that if I violate these policies and procedures, I may be referred to managing office personnel for a misconduct investigation and/or held fiscally responsible for my actions. If I have any questions, I will contact my supervisor.

Acknowledgment of Return

My signature below certifies that the cell phone (and any accessories) issued to me have been returned to the issuing office.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____