

**GOVERNMENT-FURNISHED HEADSTONE/MARKER/MEDALLION  
TITLE AND DISPOSITION**

**1. PURPOSE:** This notice clarifies policies and procedures related to the ownership and disposition of all types and styles of Government-furnished headstones, markers and medallions provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to mark the final resting place or memorialize eligible veterans, spouses, and dependents.

**2. POLICY**

TITLE/OWNERSHIP

a. All Government-furnished headstones/markers/medallions remain the property of the United States Government in perpetuity. Under title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), section 1.218(b)(5), the “destruction, mutilation, defacement, injury, or removal of any monument, gravestone, or other structure within the limits of any national cemetery is prohibited,” and there are specific fines for such actions. In addition, knowingly converting Government property to private use (such as using whole or partial headstones or markers in structures or landscaping, or offering such items for sale) is a violation of Federal law under title 18, United States Code, section 641.

PLACEMENT

b. Government-furnished headstones/markers/medallions should not be used for any purpose other than to mark the grave or commemorate the memory of an eligible veteran, spouse, or dependent, as noted:

(1) Headstones and markers (including niche covers) are used to mark a gravesite or columbarium niche and should be placed at the gravesite (or in the case of a second marker in a private cemetery under 38 CFR 38.631(a), if placement on the grave is impossible or impracticable, as close to the grave as possible within cemetery grounds) of an eligible person buried in accordance with State or local law.

(2) Memorial headstones and markers are used to memorialize those whose remains are unavailable for interment as described in title 38 of the United States Code, section 2306. Memorial headstones/markers for eligible Veterans may be placed in any cemetery. Memorial headstones/markers for eligible spouses or dependents may be placed only in a memorial area in a national or State veterans cemetery.

(3) Medallions are used to indicate the status of the deceased as a Veteran and can only be affixed to a privately-purchased headstone or marker at a veteran’s gravesite in a private cemetery. No medallions will be provided for memorial headstones/markers, or installed on any headstone/marker in Federally-administered or State veterans cemeteries.

ALTERATION

c. Government-furnished headstones/markers/medallions should not be defaced or altered in any way (except as noted under REMOVAL/DISPOSITION). NCA, acting on behalf of VA, retains the right to remove any item or object placed on or affixed to a Government-furnished headstone or marker. Nothing shall be added to or removed from the original headstone or marker except when:

(1) Directors of Federally-administered national and State veterans cemeteries are authorized to arrange for the inscription of information for additional decedent(s) or reapplication of lithochrome;

(2) The initial headstone or marker application requests blank space for the purpose of adding a future inscription for a spouse/dependent, or other additional inscription items (Government-furnished headstones/markers placed in private cemeteries may have additional inscriptions added by private arrangement, at private expense); or

(3) An exception is permitted in writing by the Director, Memorial Programs Service (MPS).

#### REMOVAL/DISPOSITION

d. When a Government-furnished headstone/marker/medallion is removed from a gravesite or memorial area in any cemetery, the headstone/marker/medallion should be destroyed and/or properly disposed of in accordance with the procedures specified below to preclude any other use (note title/ownership information in paragraph 2.a. of this notice). This includes when a memorial headstone/marker was furnished and the decedent's remains later became available for interment because they were recovered and/or identified.

(1) **Stone** (marble or granite) headstones/markers should be physically broken into the smallest pieces possible to ensure no portion of the inscription is legible. The marble or granite pieces should be permanently disposed of to ensure no part of the stone is available for any private, personal, or commercial use.

(2) **Bronze** items (including flat markers, niche markers, and medallions) should be returned to the foundry for recycling. The MPS Program Support Unit (PSU) can provide information about recycling procedures. All requests to return a bronze marker or medallion should be sent to the PSU electronic mailbox at [MPSProgSupport@va.gov](mailto:MPSProgSupport@va.gov).

**3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** National Cemetery Administration, Office of Field Programs, Memorial Programs Service, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for the contents of this notice.

#### **4. RESCISSIONS**

a. Department of Memorial Affairs Headstone and Marker Manual 40-3, Chapter 4, paragraphs 4.10 and 4.11, and Chapter 9, paragraph 9.04(c) (December 1, 1982)

b. Department of Memorial Affairs Manual 40-2, *National Cemeteries Administration, Operation, and Maintenance*, Chapter 9, paragraph 9.09 (May 1, 1984)

**5. EXPIRATION:** The information contained in this notice will remain in effect until incorporated into an official directive or handbook.

/s/

Anita R. Hanson  
Director, Memorial Programs Service