

**NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
PROGRAM**

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** This directive updates policies and responsibilities of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Emergency Preparedness Program, established to assure safe and healthful working conditions.
2. **SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** This directive makes technical changes to clarify the FNOE responsibilities for employee positions and update the Federal Continuity Directive 1 (FCD-1), superseded by Federal Continuity Directive, *Federal Executive Branch Continuity Program Management Requirements*.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** NCA, Human Capital Management Directorate, Training, Workforce Development and Safety Service, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for the contents of this directive. Questions can be directed to the NCA Preparedness Coordinator.
4. **RELATED PUBLICATION:** VA Directive 0320 – VA Comprehensive Emergency Management Program, August 13, 2012.
5. **RESCISSIONS:** This issuance supersedes NCA Directive 0320 – National Cemetery Administration Emergency Preparedness Program (February 15, 2022).
6. **RECERTIFICATION:** This directive is scheduled for recertification the last business day of February 2027.

/s/
Matthew T. Quinn
Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs

Distribution: Electronic

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE/AUTHORITY:

a. This directive provides policy, direction, and general orientation to all management levels in the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) on emergency preparedness planning.

b. The statutory authority for this directive is codified in Sections 307, 2400(a), and 2404(a) of Title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.). Other authorities and related agency guidance are specified throughout this directive and listed in the References section.

c. NCA Emergency Preparedness publications, such as this directive, are meant to supplement (not supersede) Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policies and regulatory guidance. For purposes of this directive, the term “facility” includes all VA National Cemeteries, National Scheduling Office, Memorial Processing Sites, District Offices, NCA Finance Office and NCA Contracting Office located outside of the VA Central Office campus area.

2. POLICY:

a. It is NCA policy to prepare for emergency situations by identifying functions to be performed during an emergency; developing plans to perform these functions; maintaining the capability to implement the plans; and to conduct training events to test the effectiveness of plans and procedures.

b. All Cemetery Directors and key program officials will meet essential needs during a national emergency, including responding to the needs of individuals and state and local governments as directed. NCA key program officials include: Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs; Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs; NCA Chief of Staff; all Senior Executives and NCACO Service Directors.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **The Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs (USMA)** will:

(1) Approve Continuity plan to support NCA’s essential functions through an the NCA Continuity Program that meets emergent needs;

(2) Assist and support the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in discharging responsibilities under Executive Order 12656 (Assignment of Emergency Responsibilities);

(3) Serve in the line of succession to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, subject to the

provisions of Presidential Executive Order 13736 (Providing an Order of Succession Within the Department of Veterans Affairs); and

(4) Support the Veterans Affairs' "Fourth Mission", to improve the Nation's preparedness for response to war, terrorism, national emergencies, and natural disasters by developing plans and taking actions to ensure continued service to Veterans, as well as to support National, state, and local emergency management, public health, safety, and homeland security efforts. This aligns with Emergency Support Function #8 – "Public Health and Medical Services", which outlines that NCA will take action to bury and memorialize eligible Veterans and advise on methods for interment of the deceased during national and homeland security emergencies.

b. The Deputy Under Secretary for Finance and Planning will:

(1) Provide support for emergency funding, accounting, and reimbursement from Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance provided in Stafford Act declared disasters and emergencies and for non-Stafford Act incidents; and

(2) Ensure appropriate allocation of funds for the NCA Continuity Program.

c. The Deputy Under Secretary for Management will:

(1) Provide resources for support of emergency contracting when requested during emergencies;

(2) Provide resources for assistance with damage surveys, emergency repairs, and preparedness of the physical facilities;

(3) Ensure appropriate personnel and resource support for the NCA Continuity Program; and

(4) Review and confirm that NCA has a Continuity Program.

d. The Executive Director, Human Capital Management (HCM), will:

(1) Provide guidance and assistance to key program officials in the development of plans and procedures for:

(i) The emergency interment and memorialization operations at national cemeteries; and

(ii) Participation with the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and FEMA, as provided for in interagency agreements (see VA Handbook 0320, Emergency Preparedness Planning Procedures).

(2) Develop policies, plans and procedures for the performance of emergency functions related to memorial affairs and national cemetery activities;

(3) Designate an emergency planner (the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator) and Alternate Emergency Preparedness Coordinator(s) to have primary responsibility for planning and developing emergency procedures for NCA;

(4) Establish a Continuity Program;

(5) Represent NCA on the VA Crisis Response Team (CRT); and

(6) Provide Human Resources support during times of emergencies.

e. The NCA Emergency Preparedness Coordinator (EPC) will:

(1) Monitor and coordinate emergency preparedness planning within NCA, and between NCA and others (e.g., interagency, partners, internal VA partners);

(2) Maintain a list of NCA's Emergency Relocation Group members who would be needed in the event of a national emergency, advise such personnel of their responsibilities on a periodic basis, and submit such list to the Office of Operations, Security and Preparedness, on a monthly basis;

(3) Coordinate security clearance processes for NCA personnel to include monitoring status and level of security clearances;

(4) Confirm the selection, shipment, maintenance, and disposition of official NCA emergency operating records to VA relocation site(s);

(5) At a minimum conduct a bi-annual review of the emergency records in place at the relocation site(s);

(6) Conduct quarterly tests of NCA Emergency Communications and test the following programs:

(i) NCA Employee Alerting and Accountability System (EAAS);

(ii) NCA Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) card testing; and

(iii) NCA Satellite phones testing.

(7) Represent NCA on the CRT when requested by Executive Director, HCM;

(8) Verify that the EAAS system is updated monthly;

(9) Develop guidelines for evaluating cemetery emergency plans;

(10) Review all cemetery Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) annually and develop recommendations for improvements;

(11) Confirm that during an emergency situation the VA Office of Operations, Security and Preparedness and VA Office of Administration are notified of activated plans, given reports of status and completed actions, and, in the absence or incapacity of the USMA, provide the name and title of the successor who is acting as the USMA;

(12) Maintain NCA's Continuity Program (e.g., up to date plans, rosters and supporting documentation); and

(13) Coordinate NCACO emergency response activities with the Office of Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) Office of Administration.

f. **The Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs and Cemetery Operations** will provide personnel and resource support for the NCA Continuity Program and for emergency management activities.

g. **The Executive Director, Cemetery Operations** will:

(1) Coordinate District and Cemetery activities with the EPC, Office of Cemetery Operations, and Office of Field Programs during times of emergency;

(2) Facilitate the development of plans for the continuation or restoration of burials to eligible decedents as soon as possible after an emergency and prepare interment operating plans and programs designed to inter and memorialize eligible decedents, including plans to handle a significant increase in burials resulting from a catastrophic event;

(3) Evaluate and confirm National Cemeteries and District Offices maintain a record of emergency related expenses during emergencies;

(4) Provide NCA a staffed and equipped Watch Desk to support communications with the field; and

(5) Monitor and confirm that NCA has communications with the field via the NCA Watch Desk.

h. **The Executive Director, Field Programs** will:

(1) Coordinate Memorial Product Service and National Cemetery Scheduling Office activities with the EPC and Office of Cemetery Operations, and as necessary, with other entities that provide burial and memorial services to Veterans, (e.g., States and Tribes) during times of emergency;

(2) Coordinate with local emergency management officials and keep stakeholders apprised of changes to normal operations. Facilitate the development of plans for the continuation or restoration of eligibility determinations and scheduling of burials as soon as possible after an emergency;

(3) Evaluate and confirm Memorial Product Service and National Cemetery Scheduling Office maintain a record of emergency related expenses during emergencies; and

(4) Confirm and maintain communications with all geographically dispersed Field Programs employees and report status to the NCA Watch Desk, as required.

i. NCA Watch Desk Officers will:

(1) Provide the communications link to the VA Integrated Operations Center (VAIOC) and the field for NCA during regular operations and emergency operations;

(2) Maintain situational awareness for NCA (e.g., monitor databases, open source communications, and internal communications with other administrations and staff offices);

(3) Manage the First Notice of Event (FNOE) program for NCA and ensure continuous reporting of events;

(4) Serve as the NCA representative to the VAIOC; and

(5) Provide the link to the field for emergency management reporting items (i.e., EAP updates, annual reports, etc.) using the Master Tracker process.

j. The District Executive Directors will:

(1) Coordinate District and Cemetery activities with the NCA EPC, Office of Cemetery Operations, and Office of Field Programs;

(2) Evaluate cemetery EAP's annually; and ensure plans are sent to the NCA EPC by 31 December each year;

(3) Identify and recommend how NCA resources can best be used to assist other VA facilities in mitigating the effects of an emergency;

(4) Coordinate District and Cemetery activities with DOD, HHS, DHS, and FEMA during times of emergency;

(5) Confirm National Cemeteries and their offices maintain a record of emergency related expenses during emergencies;

(6) Verify that Cemetery Directors conduct emergency training and exercises for their staff in their districts; and

(7) Ensure that FNOE's are reported in a timely manner and provide continuous updates.

k. **Director, Veterans Cemetery Grant Program** will:

(1) Communicate with Veterans Cemetery Grant Program (VCGP) cemeteries and State and Tribal leadership as necessary and feasible (based on the emergent situation) so that NCA senior leadership is aware of impacts on burial and memorial benefits when States, Tribes, and their VCGP facilities are impacted by emergencies. As required, report this information to the NCA Watch Desk; and

(2) Provide recommendations to NCA senior leadership on how VA can assist State and Tribal veterans' cemeteries in restoring burial and memorial benefits impacted by emergent situations.

l. **The Senior Management Officials (including Cemetery Directors)** at facilities located outside Washington, D.C., will:

(1) Confirm that their facility has an EAP that meets the requirements outlined in SOP B09 of NCA Directive 7700 – National Cemetery Administration Occupational Safety and Health Program. A template for this plan is located on the Emergency Management SharePoint site (accessible for VA Employee use only) – <https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/VACONCAITBRAS/Safety/EmergencyPreparedness/default.aspx>;

(2) Confirm that their EAP is updated every fiscal year and forwarded to their Districts or management offices for review and signature by the 31st of October;

(3) Conduct at least two exercises per fiscal year for the staff at their facility;

(4) Provide After Action Reports (AAR) of their exercises to their District or management office and also to the NCA EPC;

(5) Make necessary changes based off AARs to correct emergency management procedures to attain a safe working environment during times of crisis;

(6) Participate in emergency communications testing (EAAS, GETS, and Satellite Phones) every quarter;

(7) Confirm their cemetery or office maintains a record of emergency related expenses during emergencies;

(8) Prepare to support emergency management taskers as they arise; and

(9) Ensure that FNOE's are reported in a timely manner and provide continuous updates.

m. **NCA Managers and Supervisors** at facilities located in Washington D.C. will:

(1) Inform employees under their direction of emergency preparedness actions and plans at their facility;

(2) Require employees to participate in HRA/OSP Office of Administration exercises when conducted during the fiscal year;

(3) Make necessary changes based off AARs to correct emergency management procedures and to attain a safe working environment during times of crisis;

(4) Participate in emergency communications testing conducted by VA Office of Operations, Security and Preparedness or NCA HCM Safety; and

(5) Evaluate and confirm their offices maintain a record of emergency related expenses during emergencies; and

(6) Ensure that FNOE's are reported in a timely manner and provide continuous updates.

n. **NCA Employees** will:

(1) Follow all relevant VA, and NCA Emergency Management requirements;

(2) Participate in emergency training and exercises at their facility; and

(3) Participate in emergency communications testing conducted by NCA HCM Safety.

4. SUCCESSION

a. Succession establishes the formal, sequential assumption of a position's authorities and responsibilities, to the extent not otherwise limited by the law, by the holder of another specified position identified in Executive Order, or Presidential Directive, in statute, or by relevant Department or Agency policy or regulation. If there is no applicable Executive Order, Presidential Directive or statute, in the event of a vacancy in office or a position holder dies, resigns, or is otherwise unable to perform the functions and duties of the pertinent position a delegation of authority may direct specific functions or roles associated with the vacant position roles and responsibilities.

b. **Applicability**

(1) Succession will only take place in the following situations: an emergency, when the incumbent is incapacitated or unable to perform the duties of their office, or succession is directed by a higher authority (e.g., Secretary of Veterans Affairs). In order to avoid a conflict of authority, communication within the line of succession is required prior to and during any of the three succession situations mentioned. The process of succession will continue until the successor is relieved by the principal official (current highest-ranking individual in NCA according to established lines of succession), someone higher than the successor in the order of succession, or by direction from a higher authority.

(2) The individual who succeeds to the office of a principal official will promptly report that fact to the next higher management level by the most expeditious means of communication available; e.g., an individual succeeding the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs will report that fact immediately to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(3) Each successor designee (see paragraph 4.c.(2) below) should be familiar with the duties that would be performed in an emergency.

c. Lists of Successors

(1) Lists of successors to the Under Secretary, Principal Deputy Under Secretary, Deputy Under Secretaries, Senior Executives, District Executive Directors, and Service Directors will be determined by the individuals holding that specific position. These principal officials will then provide the lists of successors to the NCA EPC for inclusion in VA's Essential Records Listing (see paragraph 4.b.(1)). Lists of successors will be reviewed and updated annually by the EPC. Successors must be appointed and not in an acting capacity.

(2) In the absence or incapacity of the Under Secretary during an emergency, command will pass to the incumbents who have been appointed by the Under Secretary to the positions listed, in the order indicated in the NCA Continuity Plan, if the incumbent is at a location with command capability:

- (i) Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs;
- (ii) Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs and Cemetery Operations;
- (iii) Deputy Under Secretary for Management; and
- (iv) Executive Director, Southeast District, Atlanta, GA.

(3) Each Key Program Official in NCA will designate appropriate position(s) in order of priority to serve as the Key Program Official's successor in the event of the Key Program Official's absence or incapacity during an emergency.

(4) Each National Cemetery Director will designate appropriate position(s) in order of priority to serve as the Cemetery Director's successor in the event of the Cemetery Director's absence or incapacity during an emergency. This will be annotated in the Cemetery Director's Cemetery Emergency Action Plan.

5. REFERENCES:

- a. Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8), March 30, 2011.
- b. Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 5, Management of Domestic Incidents, February 28, 2003.
- c. Executive Order 12472, "Assignment of National Security and Emergency Preparedness Telecommunications Functions", April 3, 1984, as amended.
- d. Executive Order 12656, "Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities", dated November 18, 1988, as amended.
- e. Executive Order 13618, "Assignment of National Security and Emergency Preparedness Communications Functions", July 6, 2012.
- f. National Preparedness Goal, Department of Homeland Security, September 2015.
- g. National Response Framework, Department of Homeland Security, February 28, 2019.
- h. 42 U.S.C. § 5121, Congressional findings and declarations.
- i. 38 U.S.C. § 8111, Sharing of Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense health care resources.
- j. 38 U.S.C. § 8117, Emergency Preparedness.
- k. Executive Order 13736, "Providing an Order of Succession Within the Department of Veterans Affairs", August 12, 2016.
- l. Presidential Policy Directive (PPD- 40), "National Continuity Policy", July 2016.
- m. Office of Science and Technology Policy/Office of Management and Budget Directive D-16-1, "Minimum Requirements for Federal Executive Branch Communication Capabilities", December 11, 2018.
- n. Federal Continuity Directive, Federal Executive Branch Continuity Program Management Requirements, August 2024

- o. VA Secretary letter to DHS and FEMA regarding the identification of VA Primary Mission Essential Function and Mission Essential Functions, December 11, 2018.
- p. NCA Directive 7700, National Cemetery Administration Occupational Safety and Health Program, January 14, 2019.
- q. NCA Directive 0322, First Notice of Event (FNOE) (October 2, 2024)).
- r. VA Directive 0320, VA Comprehensive Emergency Management Program, (August 13, 2012).
- s. VA Handbook 0320, Comprehensive Emergency Management Program (March 24, 2005).
- t. VA Directive 0325, Personnel Accountability (February 8, 2020).
- u. Emergency Support Function (ESF) #8 – Public Health and Medical Services, June 2016.

6. DEFINITIONS

- a. **Emergency Action Plan.** A written document required by particular Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards. The purpose of an EAP is to facilitate and organize employer and employee actions during workplace emergencies.
- b. **Emergency Support Function.** The structure for coordinating Federal interagency support for a Federal response to an incident. This structure serves as a means to group functions that provide federal support to states and federal to federal support, both for Stafford Act declared disasters and emergencies and for non-Stafford Act incidents.
- c. **NCA Continuity Program.** A program that is developed to ensure the ability to provide uninterrupted services and support, while maintaining organizational viability, before during and after an event that disrupts normal operations.
- d. **NCA Emergency Relocation Group.** Staff assigned to continue performance of essential functions at an alternate location in the event that their primary operating facility or facilities are impacted or incapacitated by an incident.
- e. **VA Crisis Response Team.** Element of the VA Emergency Relocation Group that consists of senior officials from each administration and staff office.