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Burials benefits FAQs

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Headstones, markers, and inscriptions

How can I find out the status of my headstone order?

To obtain the status of headstones or markers ordered for national VA or state cemetery, please contact the cemetery directly. Find a VA or state cemetery

For a headstone or marker ordered for a private cemetery: If more than 60 days have passed since submitting your claim and the grave is still not marked, you should contact the cemetery, funeral home, or other party responsible for accepting delivery of the headstone, marker or medallion to see if they have received it. If they have not received it, you may call our Applicant Assistance office toll free at 800-697-6947, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. ET.

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Flags, Presidential Memorial Certificates, and other memorial items

What is a Presidential Memorial Certificate?

A Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) is an engraved paper certificate, signed by the current President, to honor the memory of honorably discharged deceased Veterans.

How do I check the status of my request for a presidential memorial certificate?

If you have already requested a PMC more than sixteen (16) weeks ago and have not received it yet, please call 202-632-7300 to find out the status of your request. Please do not send a second application unless we request you to do so.

If you're a Veteran Service Officer or a funeral home, contact us at 202-632-7300. You may also send request for status by email to pmc@va.gov.

What is a burial flag?

We provide a United States flag to drape on a casket (or coffin) or place with an urn in honor of the military service of a Veteran or Reservist. Find out how to apply for a burial flag.

Am I eligible for a burial flag?

You can get a burial flag if you're the next of kin or a close friend of the Veteran or Reservist and any one of the descriptions below is true for that person.

One of these must describe the service of the Veteran or Reservist. They:

- Served in wartime, **or**
- Died while serving on active duty after May 27, 1941, **or**
- Served after January 31, 1955, **or**
- Served in peacetime and left military service before June 27, 1950, after serving at least 1 enlistment, or because of a disability that was caused—or made worse—by their active military service, **or**
- Served in the Selected Reserves (in certain cases), or served in the military forces of the Philippines while in service of the United States and died on or after April 25, 1951.

For more information on either of these situations, call 800-827-1000, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET.

How do I get a burial flag to honor a Veteran or Reservist?

To get a burial flag, fill out the Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes (VA Form 27-2008).

[Download VA Form 27-2008 \(PDF\)](#)

Bring the application form to:

- A funeral director, **or**
- A VA regional office, **or**
- A United States post office. Call ahead to make sure your local post office has burial flags. If they don't, they can direct you to one that does.

How do I care for the flag?

Follow these guidelines to care for the flag:

- To protect the flag from weather damage, don't leave it outside for long periods of time.
- Use and display the flag carefully so it can't be damaged in any way.
- Don't add or attach any words or symbols or other kinds of drawings to the flag.
- Don't use the flag to hold or carry anything.

On the last page of the Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes, you can read more about how to care for a burial flag. You can also see how the flag will be displayed and then folded at a memorial service.

What else should I know about burial flags?

The Veteran's family can donate the flag to a national cemetery that has an Avenue of Flags so it can be flown on patriotic holidays.

We can't replace flags that are lost, destroyed, or stolen, but some Veterans organizations may be able to help you get a replacement if something happens to the flag we gave you.

Can I be buried at Arlington National Cemetery?

The Department of the Army maintains two national cemeteries, the Arlington National Cemetery* and the U.S. Soldiers' & Airmen's Home National Cemetery. Please contact them directly for their eligibility information.

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Burial benefits for family members

Is my mother, who is not a Veteran, entitled to a Government marker in a private cemetery?

Spouses and dependents are not entitled to a Government-furnished headstone or marker in a private cemetery.

Does the VA pay for cremation or burial expenses?

We don't pay for cremation directly. Any item or service obtained from a funeral home will be at the families' expense. However, some Veterans' families may be eligible for a burial allowance, which you can use to cover some of these expenses. View the Burial and Plot Interment Allowance fact sheet for more information. Cremated remains are buried or inurned in national cemeteries in the same manner and with the same honors as casketed remains.

What are my burial benefits?

Burial benefits available include a gravesite in any of our 136 national cemeteries with available space, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a Government headstone or marker, a burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate, at no cost to the family.

Some Veterans may also be eligible for Burial Allowances. [Learn more about burials and memorials benefits](#)

What can I do now to prepare for burial in a national cemetery?

You should advise your family of your wishes and where your discharge papers are kept. These papers are very important in establishing your eligibility. Upon request, VA will make eligibility determinations for burial in a VA national cemetery in advance of need. At the time of need your family would contact a funeral home who will assist them with making burial arrangements at the national cemetery. You may wish to make pre-need arrangements with a funeral home. To schedule a burial: 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.

I do not have my military discharge, how can I get a copy?

You can contact the National Archives* to obtain a copy of your discharge papers.

Can VA provide burial at sea?

The VA does not provide burial at sea. If you have any questions about the Burial at Sea program, please contact the United States Navy Mortuary Affairs office toll-free at 1-866-787-0081. Or contact the Department of the Navy* for information.

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Military funeral honors and the committal service

What happens during a committal service for a Veteran or service member?

When you arrive at the cemetery, a cemetery representative will meet you and give you the deceased's burial documents. They'll lead you, and others who are gathered to honor the deceased, to a committal shelter. The committal service takes place at this location, not at the gravesite, and lasts for about 20 minutes. The burial happens after the committal service.

Note: Please be aware that viewing facilities aren't available at national cemeteries, and the family must arrange for funeral facilities at a different location.

The family may choose to have readings by a friend, family member, or member of the clergy of their faith. They may also request to have military funeral honors performed at the committal shelter.

What's included in the military funeral honors?

Military funeral honors include:

- The playing of "Taps"
- A rifle detail
- A color guard
- Uniformed service members who present the burial flag

You can arrange for military funeral honors through your funeral director or get help from a Veterans Service Organization or from VA national cemetery staff. Note: If you requested a headstone, marker, or medallion, we'll arrange for it to be delivered within 60 days.

How can I pay my respects at a committal service?

You may:

- Bring flowers to accompany the casket or urn when it's taken from the committal shelter to the gravesite, and
- Visit the gravesite at the end of the workday, but not immediately following the ceremony

What happens at a military funeral at Arlington National Cemetery?

Funerals at Arlington National Cemetery are different. [Learn about Arlington National Cemetery funerals](#)

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Need more help?

National Cemetery Scheduling Office: [800-535-1117](tel:800-535-1117)

Headstones and markers: [800-697-6947](tel:800-697-6947)

VA benefits hotline: [800-827-1000](tel:800-827-1000)

Chat with us: [VA chatbot](#)

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☐ Yes ☐ No

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Get help planning a burial in a VA national cemetery, order a headstone or other memorial item to honor a Veteran's service, and apply for survivor and dependent benefits.

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