



Veterans' Burial Benefits Checklist

As a veteran, you can ensure that you and your family receive the burial benefits you are entitled to with a little advance planning. Below is a checklist to assist you in planning ahead as a veteran:

- Locate a copy of your DD Form 214.

The veteran's DD Form 214 or equivalent is required to access veterans' burial benefits. This form identifies the classification of discharge. If a veteran has anything less than a general discharge, he or she may not qualify for burial benefits. Make sure your next of kin knows where you keep your DD Form 214.
- Request a DD Form 214 or equivalent form from the VA if you do not have a copy.

If the DD Form 214 is misplaced or lost, contact Veteran Affairs or your local Veteran Service Officer to request a replacement form.
- Record your wishes about military honors.

Normally, your funeral director will contact the honor guard of the veteran's military branch if military honors are requested. One burial flag will be presented to the next of kin. Make a note of to whom the flag should be presented.
- Plan for your eligible dependents.

As a veteran, you may request burial sites for eligible spouses and dependents, even if the predecease you. Please note: gravesites cannot be reserved in advance. If you are requesting burial in a national cemetery, contact the National Cemetery Administration to make burial arrangements at the time of need. The funeral director, next of kin or person making arrangements will fax all discharge documentation to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 1-866-900-6417 and follow up by calling 1-800-535-1117. For more information, visit the National Cemetery Administration website at www.cem.va.gov. Burials at Arlington National Cemetery are reserved for military retirees, Medal of Honor recipients or service members who die on active duty.
- Understand your benefits and what is covered at a national cemetery.

A veteran buried in a national cemetery is eligible to receive an opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, government-furnished headstone or marker, one burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a grave liner at no cost to the family. Burial benefits available for spouses and dependents buried in a national cemetery include burial with the veteran, perpetual care, and the spouse or dependent's name and date of birth and death inscribed on the veteran's headstone, at no cost to the family. Eligible spouses and dependents may be buried, even if they predecease the veteran.



- ❑ Understand your benefits and what is covered at a state cemetery.

Burial benefits may also be available at your local state cemetery, including opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, grave liner, and the setting of the government-furnished headstone or marker. An eligible veteran buried in a state cemetery is still entitled to receive a government headstone or marker, one burial flag, and Presidential Memorial Certificate, at no cost to the family. Check with your funeral director for burial benefits that may be available for eligible dependents at your local state cemetery and any fees associated with burial.

- ❑ Understand your benefits and what is covered if you are buried at a private cemetery.

Veterans buried in a private cemetery may be eligible to receive a government-furnished headstone, marker or medallion, one burial flag, and Presidential Memorial Certificate, at no cost to the family. Spouses and dependents buried in a private cemetery are not eligible for any VA benefits. Contact your local Veteran Service Officer to determine eligibility.

- ❑ Understand that the VA will not pay for cremation or funeral costs in full.

The VA may pay the next of kin a burial allowance, depending on the circumstances and eligibility of the veteran. The VA recommends making arrangements with a funeral home to ensure that funeral costs will be covered.

- ❑ Understand that certain conditions affect burial allowance eligibility:

VA burial allowances are paid to offset an eligible veteran's burial/cremation and funeral costs. Burial allowances are paid if at least one of the following conditions are met:

- The veteran dies due to a service-connected disability
- The veteran is receiving a VA pension
- The veteran was entitled to receive a VA pension or compensation but decided not to reduce his/he military retirement or disability pay
- The veteran dies while in a VA or contracted-VA hospital or under VA care
- The veteran dies while traveling under proper authorization and at VA expense to and from a specified place for the purpose of treatment or examination
- The veteran had an original or reopened claim pending at the time of death, and it has been determined he/she is eligible for compensation or pension from a date prior to death
- The veteran died on or after October 9, 1996 while a patient at a VA-approved state nursing home.

Contact your VA office to determine eligibility for a burial allowance.