

# Burial Benefits

Preparing for death can help ease the burden on the deceased veteran's family. It is important to make sure your family has access to these important documents:

- The veterans discharge certificate (DD form 214)
- VA documents, if any, indicating a claim number (after June 1974 the veteran's social security number is assigned as the claim number)
- A copy of all marriage certificates and divorce decrees (if any)
- Family insurance policies and any VA insurance policies including beneficiary designation
- A copy of the family will
- Location of safety deposit boxes

The veteran who dies on active duty or under conditions other than dishonorable is entitled by law to certain benefits which are outlined below. You may visit the website [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) for a complete listing of these benefits. If the veteran dies outside of a hospital, your family or representative may call a Veteran's Benefits Counselor at 1-800-827-1000 to confirm your eligibility for burial benefits. The family can also call the VA Hospital at 1-888-469-6614 extension 42055 to report a veteran's death.

## **Burial in a VA National Cemetery**

Every veteran who is entitled to retired pay is entitled to burial in any one of 128 national cemeteries with available space. Unfortunately, the cemetery on the VA grounds in Milwaukee does not have space. Exceptions have been made for people who die on active duty in the current conflicts.

## **Headstones and Markers**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) furnishes upon request, at no charge to the applicant, a Government headstone or marker for the unmarked grave of any deceased eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world, regardless of the date of death.

## **Burial Flags**

A United States flag is provided at no cost to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran who served honorably in the U. S. Armed Forces. It is furnished to honor the memory of a veteran's military service to his or her country. VA will furnish a burial flag for each veteran who had an "other than dishonorable" discharge.

## **Reimbursement of Burial Expenses**

VA burial allowances are partial reimbursements of an eligible veteran's burial and funeral costs. When the cause of death is not service related, the reimbursements are generally described as two payments: (1) a burial and funeral expense allowance and (2) a plot or interment allowance.

*You may be eligible for a VA burial allowance if:*

- you paid for a veteran's burial or funeral, *AND*
- you have not been reimbursed by another government agency or some other source, such as the deceased veteran's employer, *AND*
- the veteran was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

*In addition, at least one of the following conditions must be met:*

- the veteran died because of a service-related disability, *OR*

- the veteran was receiving VA pension or compensation at the time of death, *OR*
- the veteran was entitled to receive VA pension or compensation, but decided not to reduce his/her military retirement or disability pay, *OR*
- the veteran died while hospitalized by VA or while receiving care under VA contract at a non-VA facility, *OR*
- the veteran died while traveling under proper authorization and at VA expense to or from a specified place for the purpose of examination, treatment, or care, *OR*
- the veteran had an original or reopened claim pending at the time of death and has been found entitled to compensation or pension from a date prior to the date of death, *OR*
- the veteran died on or after October 9, 1996 while a patient at a VA-approved state nursing home.

### **How Much Does VA Pay?**

*Service-Related Death.* VA will pay up to a maximum of \$2,000 toward burial expenses (funeral service and plot) for deaths on or after September 11, 2001. VA will pay up to \$1,500 for deaths prior to September 10, 2001. If the veteran is buried in a VA national cemetery, some or all of the cost of transporting the deceased may be reimbursed.

*Nonservice-Related Death.* VA will pay up to \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses and a \$300 plot-interment allowance for deaths on or after December 1, 2001. The plot-interment allowance is \$150 for deaths prior to December 1, 2001. If the death happened while the veteran was in a VA hospital or under VA contracted nursing home care, some or all of the costs for transporting the veteran's remains may be reimbursed.

### **Presidential Memorial Certificates**

A Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC) is an engraved paper certificate, signed by the current President, to honor the memory of the deceased veteran. This certificate may be issued for veterans who died at any time – even in the distant past. Eligible recipients including next of kin and other loved ones, or someone acting on their behalf, may apply for a PMC in person at any VA regional office or by U.S. mail or toll-free fax.

### **Military Funeral honors**

The Department of Defense (DOD) is responsible for providing military funeral honors. "Honoring Those Who Served" is the title of the DOD program for providing dignified military funeral honors to veterans who have defended our nation.

Upon the family's request, Public Law 106-65 requires that every eligible veteran receive a military funeral honors ceremony, to include folding and presenting the United States burial flag and the playing of Taps. The law defines a military funeral honors detail as consisting of two or more uniformed military persons, with at least one being a member of the veteran's parent service of the armed forces. The DOD program calls for funeral home directors to request military funeral honors on behalf of the veterans' family. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration cemetery staff can also assist with arranging military funeral honors at VA national cemeteries. Veteran's organizations may assist in providing military funeral honors. When military funeral honors at a national cemetery are desired, they are arranged prior to the committal service by the funeral home.

Source: [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov)

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