

VERY IMPORTANT PAPERS

REQUIRED INFORMATION TO ASSIST UPON THE DEATH OF AN ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL

**COURTESY OF
VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER
OF THE AMERICAN LEGION**

**Developed from the V.I.P. pages
Of the Veterans of Foreign Wars
May 2009**

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CALIFORNIA NATIONAL CEMETERIES

Contact your American Legion Service Officer for current the telephone numbers associated with the following locations:

Los Angeles National Cemetery (Closed) *

950 South Sepulveda Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90049

Ft. Rosecrans National Cemetery**

Point Loma, P.O. Box 6237

San Diego, CA 92106

Golden Gate National Cemetery***

1300 Sneath Lane

San Bruno, CA 94066

Riverside National Cemetery***

23495 Van Buren Blvd.

Riverside, CA 92518

San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery

32053 West McCabe Road

Gustine, CA 95322

* Available only for casket burial of eligible survivors of family members already interred;
“Closed Cemetery”

** Space available only for cremated remains.

*** Space also available for cremated remains to be placed in a columbarium.

NOTE: Most closed National Cemeteries can still accept cremated remains for internment. Full-casket gravesites occasionally become available in closed cemeteries, due to internment or relinquishment of gravesites reservations made prior to 1962. Therefore, contact the Cemetery Director for further information regarding your options.

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Documents to Support Very Important Papers:

- **DD Form 214 or discharged form**
- **Marriage License**
- **All Insurance Policies with current beneficiaries.**
- **Termination of previous marriages. Death or divorce (both parties to marriages).**
- **Birth Certificates of children under 18, or 18 through 21, if still in school.**
- **Last will and testament or living trust.**
- **Hero wills (no life support) must be notarized and witnessed.**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Upon the death of the eligible individual, contact your local American Legion Service Officer or Auxiliary for help, information, or referral services. The American Legion Department Service Officer contact phone numbers are listed on the back of this package; they have all the required forms plus the expertise to assist the claimant in filing for their benefits.

“Honor the Dead by Helping the Living”.

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PERSONAL AFFAIRS SHEET

In applying for widow's and dependency benefits, the following questions will need to be answered. In some cases, the wife or widow may not know the answers to these questions. Therefore, the American Legion Service Department suggests that every husband and wife helps each other to complete the questionnaire and then store it in a safe place with all your other important documents. The future welfare of surviving family members could depend on providing this very information.

**KEEP THIS INFORMATION WITH ALL OTHER DOCUMENTS
TO SUPPORT THE PACKAGE.**

Name _____

Address _____

Place of Birth _____ Date of Birth _____

Social Security # _____ Service # _____

GI Ins. # _____ V.A. Claim # _____

SERVICE INFORMATION OF VETERAN

Entered Active Duty:

Date _____ Location _____

Separated from Service:

Date _____ Location _____

Branch of Service _____

Grade, Rank, or Rate _____

MARITAL INFORMATION

Number of times the Veteran has been married _____

Number of times your present spouse has been married _____

Furnish the following information about each of your previous marriages. A copy of the public or church record of your current marriage is also required.

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Veterans: Date and place of marriage _____

To Whom Married _____

Terminated (Death or Divorce) _____

Date and Place Terminated _____

Veterans: Date and place of marriage _____

To Whom Married _____

Terminated (Death or Divorce) _____

Date and Place Terminated _____

Furnish the following information about EACH previous marriage of your present spouse.

Spouse: Date and Place of Marriage _____

To Whom Married _____

Terminated: (Death or Divorce) _____

Date and Place Terminated _____

Spouse: Date and Place of Marriage _____

To Whom Married: _____

Terminated: (Death or Divorce) _____

Date and Place Terminated: _____

Information concerning children

Full Name of Children

Birth Dates

Place of Birth

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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Names and Address of Custodial Parent of Children

USE ADDITIONAL SHEET FOR OTHER CHILDREN

If the Veteran has children by previous marriage and the widow wishes to include them in the claim, she must so state and include all pertinent information. If there are legally adopted children, helpless children, illegitimate children, or stepchildren who are to be included in the claim, information concerning them will be needed as well.

If any assistance in compiling either this questionnaire or additional information is required, your American Legion Service Officer will be more than willing to assist you.

NOTES: _____

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS: _____

American Legion Service Office, Sepulveda, VA facility. Tel: 1-818-891-7711, Ext. 9148.

If either you or your spouse had previous marriages, it is important that you list how these marriages ended (death, divorce, annulment) and that you list the dates and places of termination, because the VA must have proof that your marriage to the Veteran was legal. A copy of his discharge papers is vital. It is recommended that all Legionnaires complete the personal affairs sheet. In the event of a Legionnaire's death, this completed V.I.P. Packet and the accompanying documents it references will help the American Legion Service Officer to better serve the survivors and expedite the filing of the claim.

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VA OFFICE ON LINE NOW 24-HOURS PER DAY

1-800-827-1000

Are you receiving all of your benefits to which you are entitled?

The VA has a new telephone assistance service that provides answers to frequently asked benefits questions, such as those regarding home loans, insurance, education benefits, compensation, and pension issues. The service is available to callers from any touch-tone phone. The system can record your name and address, so that application forms can be mailed to you the next business day. You can also speak to an on-hand counselor during normal business hours.

RETIRED SERVICEMAN'S WIDOW

1. Service Record (DD-214)
2. Discharge or Retirement Paper
3. Government Insurance Certificate
4. Marriage License
5. Birth Certificates
6. Divorce Papers
7. Death Certificate will be required. NOTE: The funeral parlor will charge for extra copies. Instead, see your American Legion Service Officer; they can make copies of the original at no charge.

SEND NOTIFICATION OF DEATH TO RESPECTIVE SERVICE. The addresses for the respective service change constantly, so contact your American Legion Service Officer or the Veterans Administration for the most current address and phone number.

REQUEST SURVIVORS BENEFIT APPLICATION FORM

Contact local Social Security Office

1. File for death allowance.
2. Inquire into Social Security Benefits for survivors.

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Contact Veterans Administration

- 1. File for headstone.**
- 2. File and claim GI insurance benefits.**
- 3. File for burial allowance. Due to a change in the law, only veterans receiving pension or compensation, or were eligible to draw compensation (retired service members with service connected disabilities) are entitled to burial allowance.**

Contact your commercial insurance carriers and check for any last wills and testaments. This information should also be stored with this V.I.P. Packet.

Change names on the following monetary instruments, titles, and deeds: bank accounts, safety deposit boxes, credit unions, savings bonds, automobiles, and real property.

Turn in the Government ID card of the deceased and obtain a new card for yourself.

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BURIAL BENEFITS

Burial in National Cemeteries

VA Cemeteries: Service members who die on active duty and Veterans discharged under conditions other than dishonorable are eligible for burial in a VA National Cemetery. With certain exceptions, service beginning after Sept. 1, 1980, as an enlisted person, and after Oct. 16, 1981, as an officer, must be for a minimum duration of 24 consecutive months or the full period for which the person was called to active duty. Reservists and National Guard members are eligible if they were entitled to retirement pay at the time of death, or would have been entitled had they not been under age 60.

Filipino Veterans: Certain Filipino Veterans of WWII, to include those who served in the Philippine Commonwealth Army (USAFFE) or recognized guerilla forces, may be eligible if the Veteran, at the time of death, was a citizen of the United States or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States who had resided in the United States.

Spouses and Minor Children's Burial: Spouses and minor children of service members and eligible Veterans also may be buried in a National Cemetery. If a surviving spouse of an eligible Veteran remarries, and that marriage is terminated by death or dissolved by annulment or divorce, the surviving spouse is eligible for burial in a National Cemetery. Burial of minor children of eligible persons is limited to unmarried children under 21 years of age, or under 23 years of age if pursuing a full-time course of instruction at an approved educational institute. Eligible Veterans unmarried adult children who become physically or mentally disabled and incapable of self-support before reaching the age of 21, or 23 (if a full-time student), are also eligible for burial.

Gravesites in National Cemeteries Cannot be Reserved: The Funeral Director or the next of kin makes internment arrangements for the eligible Veteran or dependant at the time of need by contacting the National Cemetery in which burial is desired. Reservations made under previous programs are honored. VA normally does not conduct burials on weekends. However, weekend callers will be directed to a National Cemetery that can schedule burials for the following week at all National Cemeteries.

Arlington National Cemetery: The Department of the Army operates Arlington National Cemetery. Eligibility for burial is more restrictive than at other National Cemeteries. Information on Arlington National Cemetery burials may be found on the Internet at (<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org>) or by writing to the Superintendent, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA 22111, or by calling (703) 695-3250.

Department of the Interior and State Veterans Cemeteries: The two active National Cemeteries administered by the Department of Interior are Andersonville National Cemetery in Georgia and Andrew Johnson National Cemetery in Tennessee. Eligibility for burial is similar to VA cemetery eligibility. Cemeteries for Veterans also are operated by many states. Contact the state cemetery or state Veteran affairs office, as eligibility requirements for these cemeteries may differ from those for National Cemetery.

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Headstone and Markers

Upon request, VA furnishes headstones or markers worldwide and at no charge for the grave of an eligible Veteran or service member who dies while on active duty. VA also provides headstones or markers for spouses and dependents buried in military, state or national cemeteries, but not for those buried in private cemeteries. Flat bronze, granite, or marble markers and upright granite and marble headstones are available. In the case of national cemeteries, the style chosen must be consistent with existing monuments at the place of burial. Niche markers also are available to mark columbaria used for interment of cremated remains.

Government furnished headstones and markers must be inscribed with the name of the deceased, branch of service, and the year of birth and death, in this order. Headstones and markers also may be inscribed with other items, including an authorized emblem of belief and, space permitting, additional text including military grade, rate or rank, war service such as “World War II”, complete dates of birth and death, military awards, military organizations and civilian or Veteran affiliations. When buried or memorialization is in a national, state or military cemetery, the headstone or marker must be ordered through cemetery officials. To apply and to obtain specific information on available styles, contact the cemetery where the headstone or marker is to be placed.

When burial occurs in a private cemetery, an application for a government-furnished headstone or marker must be made to VA. The government will ship the headstone or marker free of charge, but will not pay for its placement. Headstones and markers previously provided by the government may be replaced at government expense if badly deteriorated, illegible, stolen or vandalized.

To apply, mail a completed VA Form 40-1330, Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for installation in a private or State Veterans Cemetery, along with a copy of the Veteran’s military service discharge document (DD Form 214) to Memorial Programs Service (402E), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20320-0001. Or Fax documents to 1-800-455-7143. Do not send original discharge documents as they will not be returned. For information and application instructions, visit (<http://www.cem.va.org>).

Memorial Headstones or Markers

VA provides memorial headstones or markers, bearing the inscription “In Memory of” as their first line, to memorialize eligible Veterans whose remains were not recovered or identified, were buried at sea, donated to science or cremated and scattered. Eligible dependents may be memorialized only in National cemeteries. To be memorialized, dependents do not need to be “outlived” the Veteran from whom their eligibility is based.

Presidential Memorial Certificates

Certificates signed by the president are issued upon request to recognize the military service of honorably discharged deceased veterans. Next of kin, other relatives and friends may request Presidential Memorial Certificates in person at any VA regional office or by mail: Presidential Memorial Certificates (402E), National Cemetery Administration, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20420-0001. There is no preprinted form to complete or time limit for requesting these certificates, but requests should include a copy, but not the original, of the deceased Veteran’s discharge document and clearly indicate to what address the certificate should be sent.

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Additional information and a sample certificate can be found on the internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov/pmc.htm>.

Military Funeral Honors

Upon request, the Department of Defense will provide military funeral honors for the burial of military members and eligible veterans. A basic military funeral honors ceremony consists of the folding and presentation of the United States flag and the sounding of Taps by a bugler, if available, or electronic recording. A funeral honors detail to perform this ceremony consists of two or more uniformed members of the armed forces, with at least one member from the service in which the deceased veteran served.

Military members on active duty or in the Selected Reserve are eligible for military funeral honors. Also eligible are former military members who served on active duty and departed under conditions other than dishonorable, former members of the Selected Reserve who completed at least one term of enlistment or period of initial obligated service and departed under conditions other than dishonorable, and former military members discharged from Selected Reserves due to a disability or aggravated in the line of duty.

The Department of Defense maintains a toll-free telephone line (1-877-MIL-HONOR) for use by funeral directors only to request honors. Family members should inform their funeral director if they desire burials at VA national cemeteries. Veteran service organizations or volunteer groups may help provide honors. For more information, visit the military funeral honors Web page (<http://www.militaryfuneralhonors.oed.mil>).

Burial Flags

VA will furnish a United States burial flag for memorialize the following individuals:

- 1) Veterans who served during wartime, or served after Jan 31, 1955; or
- 2) Veterans who were entitled to retired pay for service in the reserves, or have been entitled to such pay but not for being under 60 years of age, or
- 3) Members or former members of the Selected Reserves who served at least one enlistment or, in the case of an officer, the period of obligation, or were discharged for disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, or died while a member of the Selected Reserve.

Reimbursement of Burial Expenses

VA will pay a burial allowance up to \$2,000 if the veteran's death is service-connected. In some instances, VA also will pay the cost of transporting the remains of a service-disabled veteran to the national cemetery nearest the home of a deceased that has available gravesites. In such cases, the person who bore the veteran's burial expense may claim reimbursement from VA. There is no time limit for filing reimbursement claims in service-connected death cases.

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VA will pay a \$300 burial and funeral expense allowance for veterans who, at time of death, were entitled to receive pension or compensation or would have been entitled to compensation but for receipt of military retirement pay. Eligibility also may be established when death occurs in a VA facility, a nursing home under VA contract or a state veterans nursing home. Additional costs of transportation of the remains may be paid. In nonservice-connected death cases, claims must be filed within two years after permanent burial or cremation.

VA will pay a \$300 plot allowance when a veteran is not in a cemetery that is under the U.S. government jurisdiction under the following circumstances: the veteran was discharged from active duty because of disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty; the veteran was in receipt of compensation or pension or would have been except for receiving military retired pay; or the veteran died in a VA facility.

The \$300 plot allowance may be paid to the state if a veteran is buried without charge for the cost of a plot or interment in state-owned cemetery reserved solely for veteran burials. Burial expenses paid by the deceased's employer or a state agency will not be reimbursed. For information on monetary benefits, call 1-800-827-1000. Additional information about burial and memorial benefits may be obtained at any VA national cemetery, regional office or on the internet (<http://www.cem.va.gov/>). To check on the status of an application for headstones or markers, call 1-800-697-6947.

Incarcerated Veterans

Persons convicted of a federal or state capital crime, and sentenced to death or life imprisonment without parole, are barred by law from burial or memorialization in a VA national cemetery or in Arlington National Cemetery, or from receiving a government-furnished headstone or marker, burial flag, or Presidential Memorial Certificate.

Department of Veteran Affairs

Burial Allowance Benefits

What is a VA Burial Allowance?

A VA burial allowance is a partial reimbursement of an eligible Veteran's burial and funeral costs. When the cause of death is not service-connected, the reimbursement is generally described as two payments:

- A burial and funeral expense allowance, and**
- A plot interment allowance.**

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Who is Eligible?

You may be eligible for a VA burial allowance if:

- **You paid for a veteran's burial and 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 must be met:

- **The veteran died because of a service-connected disability AND**
- **The veteran was getting VA pension or compensation at the time of death AND**
- **The veteran was entitled to receive VA pension or compensation but decided not to reduce his/her military retirement or disability pay**

How Much Does VA Pay?

Service-related death: VA will pay up to \$2,000 towards burial expenses. The veteran is buried in a VA national cemetery, some or all of the cost of moving the deceased may be reimbursed.

Non-service-related: VA will pay up to \$300 toward burial and funeral expenses, and a \$300 plot internment allowance. If the death happened while the veteran was in a VA hospital or under contract nursing home care, the cost of moving the deceased may be reimbursed.

How Can I Apply?

You can apply by filling out VA Form 21-530, Application for Burial Allowance. You should attach proof of the veteran's military service (DD Form 214), a death certificate, and copies of funeral and burial bills you have paid.

Related Benefits

- **Burial in VA National Cemeteries**
- **Headstone and Markers**
- **Presidential Memorial Certificates**
- **Burial Flags**

**For More Information
Call Toll-Free**

1-800-827-1000

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MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS PROGRAM

- I. The Veteran Honors Program (VHP) is a federally mandated and state funded program to provide Military Funeral Honors to California's deceased veterans. Services are available seven days a week, 365 days a year, and at the time and convenience of the deceased veteran's family.**
 - A. Depending on availability, these are the types of Military Funeral Honors available to our Veterans.**
 - 1. Full Military Funeral Honors consist of seven or more service representatives who will act as pallbearers, render benediction (Chaplain), fire three volleys, sound "Taps", and fold the flag. And present the flag to the next of kin.**
 - 2. Partial Military Funeral Honors consist of four service representatives who will fire volleys, sound "Taps", fold the flag, and present the flag to the next of kin.**
 - 3. Standard Military Funeral Honors consist of no less than two service representatives who will sound "Taps" (CD), fold the flag, and present the flag to the next of kin.**
 - 4. Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) are certified organizations run by Retired Veterans who volunteer their time to render honors to their deceased comrades.**
 - B. Veterans are eligible for a MFH if they meet certain requirements.**
 - 1. The soldier was in active duty status at the time of death or actively drilling with a Selected Reserve unit.**
 - 2. The soldier was discharged from active service (180 consecutive days or more) under conditions "other than dishonorable".**
 - 3. Completed at least one term of obligated service in the Selected Reserve under conditions "other than dishonorable".**
 - 4. Discharged from Active Duty or from Selective Reserve due to disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.**
 - C. The process of requesting a MFH has been designed to be quick and easy.**
 - 1. Family members of our deceased veteran should first notify their Funeral Director of their desire to have a MFH rendered at the service. The family must provide the Funeral Director with as much of the following as possible.**
 - a. Name of the deceased, date of birth, Social Security number, Form DD214 (discharge), or any other proof of veteran status or eligibility for burial honors.**
 - b. Branch of Service and whether it was Active, Reserve, or National Guard.**
 - c. Type of Service (Wartime, Active Duty Retired, or Reserve/National Guard Retired).**

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- d. **Dates of Service.**
 - e. **Special Awards or Medals (such as Medal of Honor and/or Purple Heart).**
2. **Once the Funeral Director has the necessary information then he/she will contact the Casualty Area Command for their particular district.**
 - a. **The United States Army Casualty Action Center for deceased soldiers within Northern and Central California (above Fresno) is located at Fort Lewis (CAC) Building 2025, Fort Lewis, Washington 94833.
Tel: (888) 634-7496 and (253) 967-0074**
 - b. **The United States Army Casualty Action Center for deceased soldiers within Southern California (including Fresno) is at Fort Huachuca (CAC), Attn: AT@s-AGO-C, Fort Huachuca, AZ 85613.
Tel: (800) 248-0759 and (520) 533-2229.**
 - c. **The United States Navy Action Center for deceased sailors within all of California is in San Diego. The contact number is (800) 326-9631.**
 - d. **The United States Marine Corps Casualty Action Center for deceased Marines within all of California is in San Diego.
Tel: (619) 542-5559.**
 - e. **The United States Air Force Casualty Action Center for deceased airman within all of California is at Travis Air Force Base, Fairfield.
Tel: (800) 819-7250 and (707) 424-2106.**
 - f. **The United States Coast Guard Action Center for deceased sailors within all of California is in Seattle, WA.
Tel: (206) 217-6400 and (510) 437-3079.**
 3. **Once respective Casualty Area Command (CAC) has been notified and provided documentation by the Funeral Director it quickly assigns the mission to the Veteran Honors Program (VHP).**
- II. The Veteran Honors Program was officially established on 01 July 2002 with 21 fulltime members broken down into eight teams and a Headquarters element. These 21 representatives are financed and equipped by the State of California.**
- A. **There are five, two-soldier teams located in five separate regions of California. Each VHP Team is a self sufficient entity trained and equipped to conduct funeral missions in their assigned area:**
 1. **Team One – Sacramento**
 2. **Team Two – Fresno**
 3. **Team Three - Long Beach**
 4. **Team Four – Riverside**
 5. **Team Five - San Diego**

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- B. The Headquarters Element is staffed with five full-time personnel who are responsible to receive missions from various CACs who assign missions to the VHP Teams, process administration forms, maintain equipment, and update the Department of Defense Database. The Headquarters Element is located at the Office of the Adjutant General (O.T.A.G.), 9800 Goethe Road, Box 55, Sacramento, CA 95827; Tel: (916) 854-3821.**

- C. The most valued members of the VHP are the National Guard soldiers/airman who have graciously volunteered their time and expertise in order to conduct funeral honors for our deceased. These soldiers and airman, are usually paid one full day of active-duty pay (Federal) commensurate with their rank and years of service (but shall never be less than \$50.00) as well as any travel cost incurred while on a mission (50 miles or more one way).**