

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

National Cemetery Administration

ELIGIBILITY FOR BURIAL DETERMINATIONS IN ADVANCE OF NEED

Summary

Many people would like to know, in advance, whether they are eligible for burial in a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) national cemetery. To assist them, VA is launching an initiative, the "Pre-Need Program," specifically aimed at helping people make sure their wishes are known and followed.

Having this information will help VA beneficiaries use the benefits they have earned, for their families and for themselves.

Once they are found eligible, individuals will be entitled to the same benefits they would receive were a determination made at the time of death. These include any or all of the following, at no cost to the family:

- Burial in any open VA national cemetery, including opening and closing of the grave
- Grave liner
- Perpetual care of the gravesite
- Government-furnished upright headstone, flat marker or niche cover
- Burial flag
- Presidential Memorial Certificate

Eligibility

The law provides eligibility for burial in a national cemetery to:

- Members of the armed forces
- Veterans who have met minimum active duty service requirements as applicable by law and who were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable

Members of the reserve components of the armed forces are also eligible, provided they:

- Died while on active duty under certain circumstances, or while performing training duty;
- Have 20 years of service creditable for retired pay; or

- Were called to active duty and served the full term of service.

The Veterans' spouse, minor children and under certain conditions dependent unmarried adult children are eligible for burial even if they predecease the eligible Veteran.

Applying for Benefits

VA encourages Veterans and their spouses to apply for a pre-need burial eligibility determination. Authorized representatives can also apply on behalf of eligible claimants.

To apply, submit:

- VA Form 40-10007, Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery ; and
- Proof of military service, such as a DD Form 214, if available (VA will attempt to locate documents that the Veteran or eligible party cannot locate).

Information should be submitted to the VA National Cemetery Scheduling Office by any of the following methods:

- Fax: 1-855-840-8299 (this is a toll-free number)
- Email: Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov
- Postal mail: NCSO, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis MO 63151

Individuals do not need to request a pre-need burial determination to be eligible at the time of need. There is no obligation for those found eligible to be buried in a VA national cemetery.

What to Expect After Applying

VA will review pre-need burial applications and provide written notice of a determination of eligibility. VA will save the information electronically for future reference and to expedite processing burial claims at the time of need.

Note: Applicants should save a copy of all documents submitted and the decision letter received. It is also a good idea to communicate with one's loved ones or estate planners where the documents are, and about the preference to be buried in a VA national cemetery.

At The Time of Need

At the eligible party's time of death, the family or personal representative should contact VA to request burial benefits. VA will confirm the pre-need eligibility determination and schedule the burial.

Because laws and personal circumstances change, VA will validate the pre-need decision using the laws in effect at the time VA receives the burial request. We will also check for any bars to receipt of the burial benefit.

Please note that applicants may indicate a preference for a VA national cemetery on the application form, but a pre-need determination of eligibility does not guarantee burial in a specific VA national cemetery or a specific gravesite. VA assigns gravesites in cemeteries with available space once death has occurred and the burial is scheduled.

For More Information

Additional information about the VA Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Program is available on the VA website at <http://www.cem.va.gov/preneed>.