

Burial and Memorial Benefits
Office of Engagement and Memorial Innovations (OEMI)
National Cemetery Administration

Pre-Need establishes your eligibility for VA burial and memorial benefits before you die, so your family doesn't have to go searching for documentation at the time of your death. Simply fill out a VA form 40-10007 and mail it in to the St. Louis office indicated on the top of the form. You can print out a form, fill out an online form, and get more information here:

<https://www.cem.va.gov/pre-need/>

VA will review your application and you will get a letter confirming or denying eligibility. If approved, place the letter in a safe location, inform your family, and then rest easy.

Pre-Need Eligibility provides Veterans and families with peace of mind. This information is particularly important for members of the Guard and Reserve, many of whom don't realize that their service entitles them to burial benefits. There are some nuances for reservists, who may have to provide additional documentation if a mobilization isn't documented on their DD-214, so it is even more important for them to apply for Pre-Need. Waiting for your family to try to establish your eligibility at the time of death can sometimes result in a non-eligible decision with little or no time to provide additional information. You owe it to your family to take care of this while you are still alive.

If a VA national, state, or tribal Veterans cemetery is selected as the final resting place, a Veteran will receive the following: gravesite, opening and closing of the grave, grave liner, and perpetual care of the gravesite. Also included are memorial benefits such as a headstone, marker or niche cover for a columbarium niche. All are absolutely free, which means a savings of thousands of dollars to the Veteran's family. The Veteran's spouse as well as minor children and unmarried adult children who legally rely on the Veteran for support are also eligible for interment free of charge, typically in the same grave or columbarium niche as the Veteran.

If the Veteran chooses to be interred in a private cemetery, he or she can still have a free government-furnished headstone, marker or niche cover. If the Veteran chooses to be buried in a private cemetery with a privately purchased headstone, marker or niche cover, the family may request a free bronze medallion with the word "Veteran" and the appropriate branch of service to attach to the Veteran's headstone. All Veterans' families also receive a burial flag. At many VA national cemeteries, NCA partners with local military units or volunteer service organizations to provide deceased Veterans with military funeral honors, including the playing of Taps and presentation of the burial flag. Finally, upon request, the Veteran's family will receive a Presidential Memorial Certificate signed by the current U.S. President. Multiple copies can be requested so that all family members can have one.

VA encourages all Veterans to take advantage of Pre-Need Eligibility to ensure they, and their families, know their eligibility status in advance. While families can always apply for the benefit at the time of death, applying in advance brings peace of mind and can help resolve eligibility problems ahead of time, when the person who knows the most about his or her service – the Veteran – is still around to answer questions. For more information about VA burial and memorial benefits, please visit www.cem.va.gov.