

Did You Know?

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That one of the most misunderstood Department of Veterans Affairs entitlement programs are burial benefits. Some veterans have the mistaken impression that the VA will take care of everything and others feel they are not entitled to anything unless they get buried in a VA National Cemetery. Well here are your clear and easy to understand burial benefits. You will notice some NEW items.

1. **HONOR GUARD:** The Department of Defense will furnish, based on availability, a 2-3 person honor guard, of which, one of the members will be from the branch of service of the deceased veteran. The arrangements are made by the undertaker and they will need a legible copy of the veteran's discharge papers or equivalent.
2. **BURIAL FLAG:** A burial flag is folded by the honor guard and presented to the next-of-kin or placed in the casket based on the family's wishes. The funeral director will pick up this flag at a local Post Office prior to the burial.
3. **TAPS:** The honor guard will play military taps and where possible a gun salute.
4. **BURIAL PLOT:** Based on space availability the veteran can be buried in a VA National Cemetery. The VA will furnish the plot, grave liner, open and close the grave, order a headstone and take perpetual care of the grave. (NEW) Vets can now apply ahead of time using a pre-need application 40-10007 to confirm their (and spouses) entitlement.
5. **HEADSTONE OR MARKER:** If the veteran is buried in a private cemetery the VA will furnish a government headstone. They come in bronze, marble, slate and granite and will be shipped, free of charge, to any cemetery in the world. Besides the standard engraving there is room for an additional 25 characters and there are over 30 religious symbols to choose from. (NEW) stones damaged by flooding or hurricanes, etc. are replaced free.
6. **PRESIDENTAL MEMORIAL CERTIFICATE:** An engraved certificate, signed by the current President, to honor the memory of honorably discharged deceased Veterans. It is mailed from the White House once the VA has been notified of the veterans passing. (NEW) more than one can be issued.
7. **MONETARY STIPEND:** If at the time of the passing, the veteran was receiving a monthly VA compensation or pension check or died in a VA hospital or nursing home the VA will pay approximately \$300, \$1,000 or up to \$2,000 depending on the cause of death. This is in addition to the Social Security stipend of \$255 and includes prepaid burials.
8. **BRONZE MEDALLION:** If a commercial headstone is purchased this medallion can be placed on the stone. It will reflect the branch of service and come in sizes ranging from 1 ½ inches, 3 inches and 5 inches. (NEW) This medallion is now available to veterans from as far back as World War I.
9. **NATIONWIDE GRAVESITE LOCATOR:** The veterans burial information will be placed in this locator and will reflect their name, branch, date of death and location of burial.

Well there you have it, an easy to remember checklist of the burial benefits. As mentioned above be sure to have readily available for the undertaker, a legible copy of your military discharge papers or its equivalent. As always if any questions please contact me at the above telephone number or e-mail address.