

Burial Benefits for Veterans Explained

If you are a Veteran of the U.S. Armed Services, you may want to consider claiming your benefit to be buried in one of the 135 national cemeteries, including one that is located in Houston on Veterans Memorial Drive.

Veteran's burial benefits include a grave site, opening and closing of the grave, a government marker or headstone, a burial flag and a Presidential Memorial Certificate, at no cost to the family. Burial allowances may also be available to some Veterans. Cremated remains are provided for with burial or interment with the same care and honors as casketed remains.

You have the opportunity to make pre-arrangements by contracting the VA National Cemetery of your choice and requesting an eligibility determination in advance of the need.

When the need eventually arises, the funeral home chosen by the family will assist the family in making the arrangements with the VA National Cemetery. The items provided by a funeral home are not covered by this benefit. If the Veteran qualifies for additional burial benefits, some of these additional costs may be covered from this separate benefit.

You may want to further prepare by purchasing a pre-need funeral contract to pay for the casket and other funeral home items in advance of the need. You will need a DD-214 which is a copy of your military discharge. If you cannot locate the document., then you can obtain a copy online at archives.gov/veterans.

If you have never been to the Houston National Cemetery, you should go, it is beautiful and meticulously cared for. This particular cemetery has one small chapel and three outdoor pavilions that are available for services that provide for 21 burials, Monday through Friday.

Burial benefits are available to all members of the armed forces who have met minimum active duty requirements and were discharged under conditions other than dis-honorable. The Veteran's spouse and dependent children, as well as some unmarried adult children with disabilities, may also be eligible for the burial benefit.

There are many variations of eligibility criteria to be eligible for burial in a national cemetery. You may access eligibility criteria online at cem.va.gov.

Many inquiries are filed each year regarding a person's eligibility to be buried in the famous Arlington Cemetery. This prestigious cemetery is located in Arlington County, Virginia, which is across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.

The cemetery was started with 1,100 acres of land inherited by Mary Lee from her father, George Washington Parke Custis, in 1857. Custis was the grandson of Martha Washington, who had been adopted by George Washington when Custis' father died of camp fever in 1781 during the last major battle of the Revolutionary War at Yorktown.

When Custis died, Arlington passed to Mary Lee, his only surviving child who had married Robert E. Lee. Details of the history can be found online at smithsonianmag.com.

Eligibility for in-ground burial in this cemetery is very restricted. The above-ground internment is much less restrictive. Online access to review eligibility requirements for in-ground burials may be found online at arlingtoncemetery.com.

Arlington is running out of land. The cemetery currently sits on 624 acres of land. Based on the amount of land available and the current burial rate, the cemetery will close for new burials in 23 years if current eligibility rules remain in place. Another anticipated expansion into the area south of Arlington (about 40 acres) would add an additional number of years which would lengthen the closing time of their burials to the 2050's.

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