

**Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**National Cemetery Administration**

Communications & Outreach Support Division (41C2)  
Washington, DC 20420  
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[www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov)  
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# Government-Furnished Headstones and Markers

Upon request, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) furnishes at no charge to the applicant, a government headstone or marker for the grave of any deceased eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world. For all deaths occurring before Sept. 11, 2001, the VA may furnish a headstone or marker only for graves that are not marked with a private headstone.

Headstones and markers are furnished for eligible spouses and dependents of veterans only in a national, military post/base or state veterans cemetery. Spouses and dependents buried in a private cemetery are not eligible for a government-furnished headstone or marker.

Flat bronze, granite or marble markers and upright granite and marble headstones are available. The style chosen must be consistent with existing monuments at the place of burial. Niche markers are also available to mark columbaria used for inurnment of cremated remains.

## ELIGIBILITY

Any deceased veteran discharged from the U.S. armed forces under conditions other than dishonorable is eligible for a government-furnished headstone or marker.

Service after Sept. 7, 1980, must be for a minimum of 24 consecutive months or be completed under special circumstances (e.g., death on active duty.) Persons who have only limited active duty service for training while in the National Guard or Reserves are not eligible unless there are special circumstances (e.g., death while on duty or as a result of training.) Persons with 20 years of service in the National Guard or Reserves who are entitled to retired pay are also eligible for a government headstone or marker. A copy of the *Reserve Retirement Eligibility Benefits Letter* must accompany the application. Active duty service (other than active duty for training) while in the National Guard or Reserves also establishes eligibility.

For death occurring on and after Sept. 11, 2001, any deceased active duty servicemember or eligible veteran discharged from the U.S. armed forces under conditions other than dishonorable is entitled to a government-furnished headstone or marker. If the death occurred before Sept. 11, 2001, by law, VA may only furnish a headstone or marker if the grave is unmarked.

Further information concerning eligibility can be accessed from the National Cemetery Administration web site at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov).

## HOW TO ORDER A GOVERNMENT HEADSTONE OR MARKER

Cemetery officials will order the headstone or marker if the veteran is buried or memorialized in a national, post or state veterans cemetery.

When burial is in a private cemetery, VA Form 40-1330, *Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker*, must be completed and submitted along with a copy of the veteran's military discharge documents. Do not send original documents, as they will not be returned.

VA Form 40-1330 and additional application information may be obtained from any VA regional office or national cemetery or by calling **1-800-827-1000**. A printable copy of the form and instructions are available on the NCA Web site at [www.cem.va.gov/hmorder.htm](http://www.cem.va.gov/hmorder.htm). Completed applications and documents may be faxed toll-free to 1-800-455-7143 or mailed to:

Memorial Programs Service (41A1)  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
5109 Russell Road  
Quantico, VA 22134-3903

## INSCRIPTIONS

Government-furnished headstones and markers must be inscribed with the legal name of the deceased, branch of service and the year of birth and death, in this order. Memorial markers must also include "*In Memory Of*" at the top. If space is available, the inscription may also contain any or all of the following: veteran's rank, war service, military decorations, awards and month and day of birth and death. All of these items must be inscribed in English.

If desired, headstones and markers may also include an approved emblem of belief. A listing of the approved emblems of belief available for placement on headstones and markers is available on the NCA Web site. A listing is also on the back of the application form (VA 40-1330).

Additional personalized inscriptions such as terms of endearment ("beloved brother and son"; "loving wife and mother", etc.), nicknames ("Poppy", "Funny Face", etc.), affiliation with military components or organizations ("Women's Army Corps", "WAC", "WAVES", etc) or veterans groups may be added at the bottom of the headstone or marker with the VA's approval, if space is available and the requested inscription is respectful and in good taste.

Civilian titles such as Doctor or Reverend, or any other additions to the legal name, are not permitted on the mandatory name line of the headstone or marker, but may be added as part of the additional inscription at the bottom of the marker.

Additional inscriptions may be in any language so long as they are inscribed using characters of the Latin alphabet (A, B, C, . . . 1, 2, 3 . .etc. ). Both letters and numbers may be used, and where appropriate, accent marks such as the tilde, ampersand, parenthesis, colon and hyphen may also be used.

If requesting an additional inscription in any language other than English, the request must include the proper English-language translation of the inscription.

No graphics such as logos or symbols, are permitted on government-furnished headstones and markers other than the approved emblems of belief, the Civil War Union Shield, the Civil War Confederate Southern Cross of Honor, and the Medal of Honor insignias.

Documentation must be provided with [VA Form 40-1330, \*Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker\*](#), when requesting military awards in the inscription. In most cases this information is provided on the veteran's military discharge documents. Military awards and decorations (including those from foreign governments) other than those listed in Block 8 of the application may be added if space is available. They should be requested in Block 27. Awards and decorations will not be included without documentation to support the request.

A veteran's spouse or other non-veteran dependent buried in a private cemetery is not eligible for a government-furnished headstone or marker. However, if requested on the application, space may be reserved below the veteran's inscription so that the non-veteran's information can be inscribed later by private arrangement at private expense. Or, if requested on the application, the non-veteran dependent's name and date of birth can be included, as an additional inscription at Government expense and the date of death may be added later at private expense.

## **CHECKING YOUR HEADSTONE OR MARKER ORDER STATUS**

It generally takes from 30 - 60 days to process each application and have the headstone or marker produced and delivered. We request your patience and ask that you please allow sufficient processing time before calling to check on the status.

To check on the status, you may call our *Applicant Assistance Line* toll-free at 1-800-697-6947 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Or you may e-mail [mps.headstones@va.gov](mailto:mps.headstones@va.gov).

When inquiring by e-mail, be sure to include the veteran's full name, social security number (and/or service number), date of death and any other information regarding the veteran's service that may be helpful in researching our records. Please allow at least three business days for a response. Our telephone and e-mail customer service representatives do not have access to information about other VA benefits. To inquire about other VA benefits, please call 1-800-827-1000.

## **SHIPPING GOVERNMENT HEADSTONES AND MARKERS**

Government-furnished headstones and markers are shipped free of charge.

## **SETTING GOVERNMENT HEADSTONES AND MARKERS**

Cemetery staff in all national, military post or base cemeteries will set the headstone or marker free of charge. However, some state veterans' cemeteries and most private cemeteries charge a fee for setting a government headstone or marker. This is a non-reimbursable expense.

## **REPLACEMENT HEADSTONES AND MARKERS**

Government headstones and markers may be replaced at government expense when badly deteriorated, illegible, stolen or vandalized. The government may also replace a headstone or marker: if it is damaged; the material or workmanship are of poor quality; it contains inscription errors, it is different from what was requested on the application; or it is not permitted by the cemetery.

If cemetery personnel damage a government headstone or marker located in a private cemetery, it should be replaced at the expense of the cemetery.

If a marble or granite headstone or marker is permanently removed from a grave, it must be destroyed beyond legibility. Bronze markers must be returned to the contractor for recycling. (Please contact Memorial Programs Service at 1-800-697-6947 or by e-mail at [mps.headstones@va.gov](mailto:mps.headstones@va.gov) for guidance concerning the return of bronze markers.)

## **MEMORIAL HEADSTONES AND MARKERS**

Memorial headstones and markers, for individuals or groups, are furnished for eligible deceased active duty service members and for veterans whose remains are not recovered or identified, are buried at sea, donated to science or whose cremated remains have been scattered.

Memorial headstones and markers may also be furnished in national, military post/base or state veterans cemeteries for eligible spouses or other dependents whose remains are unavailable for interment, whether or not they predecease the eligible veteran.

These headstones and markers bear an *"In Memory Of"* inscription as their first line and must be placed in a recognized cemetery.

Memorial headstones and markers for spouses or other dependents are not available for placement in private cemeteries.

## **CIVIL WAR ERA HEADSTONES AND MARKERS**

There are specific styles of upright headstones and flat markers to mark the graves of Union and Confederate Civil War and Spanish-American War dead.

Proof of military service prior to World War I requires detailed documentation, such as muster rolls, extracts from state files, pension documents or land warrants, to be considered for a government headstone or marker.

Memorial markers are not usually provided for Civil War soldiers. The mere fact that the whereabouts of the grave is not known is not sufficient reason to furnish a government headstone or marker. If, however, documentation shows the soldier was buried in a mass grave, but the actual location of the body is unknown, VA will furnish a memorial marker for placement in a national, state veterans' or private cemetery.

# AUTHORIZED EMBLEMS OF BELIEF FOR PLACEMENT ON GOVERNMENT HEADSTONES AND MARKERS

AUTHORIZED EMBLEMS (See block 12)



(1)  
CHRISTIAN



(2)  
BUDDHIST



(3)  
JUDAISM



(4)  
PRESBYTERIAN CROSS



(5)  
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CROSS



(6)  
LUTHERAN CROSS



(7)  
ESPICOPAL CROSS



(8)  
UNITARIAN CHURCH  
FLAMING CHALICE



(9)  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



(10)  
AARONIC ORDER CHURCH



(11)  
MORMON ANGEL MORONI



(12)  
NATIVE AMERICAN  
CHURCH OF AMERICA



(13)  
SERBAIN ORTHODOX



(14)  
GREEK CROSS



(15)  
BAHAI-9 POINT STAR



(16)  
ATHEIST



(17)  
MUSLIM-  
CRESCENT AND STAR



(18)  
HINDU



(19)  
KONKO-KYO FAITH



(20)  
COMMUNITY OF CHRIST



(21)  
SUFISM REORIENTED



(22)  
TENRIKYO CHURCH



(23)  
SEICHO-NO-IE



(24)  
THE CHURCH OF  
WORLD MESSIANITY (IZUNOME)



(25)  
UNITED CHURCH OF  
RELIGIOUS SCIENCE



(26)  
CHRISTIAN REFORMED  
CHURCH



(27)  
UNITED MORAVIAN CHURCH



(28)  
ECKANKAR



(29)  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH



(30)  
CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY  
ALLIANCE

NOTE: Not shown because of copyrights  
(96) UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
(97) CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CROSS AND CROWN  
(98) ISLAMIC 5 POINTED STAR