



Department of  
Veterans Affairs

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# Fact Sheet

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## Facts about VA's National Cemeteries

National cemeteries are hallowed places where deceased veterans and members of the armed forces receive perpetual care that honors their service to the nation. Dependent children and, usually, spouses are also eligible for burial in national cemeteries. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) manages the country's network of national cemeteries – considered by VA as “national shrines” -- through its National Cemetery Administration.

- VA maintains more than 2.9 million gravesites at 128 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, as well as in 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. Occupied gravesites may hold the remains of more than one family member.
- Approximately 295,500 full-casket gravesites, 90,200 in-ground gravesites for cremated remains, and 75,200 columbarium niches are available in already developed acreage in VA national cemeteries.
- There are more than 18,000 acres within established national cemeteries. More than half are undeveloped and -- along with available gravesites in developed acreage -- have the potential to provide more than five million gravesites.
- Of the 128 national cemeteries, 68 are open to all interments; 21 can accommodate cremated remains and the remains of family members interred in the same gravesite as a previously deceased family member; and 39 will perform only interments of family members in the same gravesite as a previously deceased family member.
- Since 1973, annual interments in VA national cemeteries have increased by more than 175 percent, from 36,400 to nearly 103,300 in 2008. Interments are expected to increase annually through 2009.
- More than 657,000 veterans in the U.S. and Puerto Rico died in 2008. Historically, more than 12 percent of U.S. veterans choose burial in VA national and state veterans cemeteries. As new veterans cemeteries open, this percentage is expected to increase.

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- The nation's most famous national cemetery – Arlington National Cemetery – is administered by the Army, rather than VA, and the National Park Service maintains 14 historical cemeteries.
- Of the 103,275 interments conducted in 2008, nearly 51 percent were in the 10 busiest national cemeteries: Riverside, Calif.; Florida, in Bushnell; Calverton, N.Y.; Fort Snelling, near Minneapolis; Jefferson Barracks, in St. Louis; Willamette, in Portland, Ore.; Fort Logan, near Denver; Fort Sam Houston, in San Antonio; Dallas-Fort Worth; and National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona, in Phoenix.
- As of Sept. 30, 2008, eight national cemeteries each contained more than 100,000 occupied gravesites, collectively accounting for 37 percent of all VA gravesites maintained: Long Island, N.Y.; Calverton; Riverside; Fort Snelling; Jefferson Barracks; Golden Gate, San Bruno, Calif.; Willamette, and Ft. Sam Houston national cemeteries.
- Largest national cemetery: Calverton, N.Y., 1,045 acres.
- Smallest national cemetery: Hampton (Va.) at the VA medical center, .03 acres.
- Oldest national cemeteries: 14 established in 1862 (12 maintained by VA).
- Newest national cemetery: Sarasota National Cemetery in Florida, opened January 9, 2009.
- Since 1973, VA has provided more than 10.2 million headstones and markers. In 2008, VA provided more than 360,000 headstones and markers.
- VA provided more than 511,000 Presidential Memorial Certificates to the loved ones of deceased veterans in 2008.
- Since 1980, the State Cemetery Grants Program has obligated more than \$344 million to 37 states, Saipan and Guam to establish, expand or improve 72 state veterans cemeteries. In 2008, VA-supported state veterans cemeteries provided more than 24,800 interments.
- Volunteers donated approximately 482,000 hours at national cemeteries during 2008.

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### **VA National Cemeteries 3/3/3**

- More than 7.7 million people visited VA national cemeteries in 2008.
- With laws passed in 1999 and 2003, Congress directed VA to establish 12 new national cemeteries. Nine of them have opened in these states: Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, California and Florida. The final three, Alabama National Cemetery, near Birmingham; Bakersfield National Cemetery, California; and Washington National Crossing National Cemetery, near Philadelphia, will open during 2009.

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*Note: References to 2008 are for fiscal year 2008 (Oct.1, 2007 – Sept.30, 2008).*