



# MILITARY HONORS

## What Funeral Directors Need to Know



Military funeral honors have always been provided whenever possible. However, the law now mandates that military funeral honors be provided for an eligible veteran if requested by the family.

**A**s provided by law, an honor guard detail for the burial of an eligible veteran consists of two or more members of the armed forces. At the minimum, the honor detail will perform a ceremony that includes the folding and presenting of the American flag to the next of kin and the playing of Taps with the veteran's service representative presenting the flag. Taps will be played by a bugler, if available, or by electronic recording. Today, there are so few buglers available that the military services often cannot provide one.

Military honors are provided by the Department of Defense at no cost to the family. Families of eligible veterans can request funeral honors through their funeral director. The funeral director then contacts the appropriate military service to arrange for the funeral honors detail, giving the military at least 48 hours in order to organize that detail.

A request for burial benefits can be found at the Veterans Benefit Administration web site at <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/candpforms.htm>.

Prior to the arrival of the military funeral detail, funeral directors will be responsible for obtaining a flag. Flags are available at the regional VA office or U.S. Post Office. VA Form 21-2008 provides the correct method for displaying the flag for both open and closed caskets and the proper way to fold the flag. The burial flag is not suitable for outside display because of its size and the cotton fabric, which can be easily damaged by weather.

The family may request a Presidential Memorial Certificate—a parchment certificate with a calligraphic inscription expressing the nation's grateful recognition of an honorably-discharged, deceased veteran's service in the armed forces. The veteran's name is inscribed and the certificate bears the signature of the president. This request can be made either in person at any VA regional office or by U.S. mail. E-mail requests are not accepted. If requesting by mail, a return address and a copy of the veteran's discharge documents must be enclosed. Send requests to:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
National Cemetery Administration (403A)  
810 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20420

### Who is eligible for military service honors?

- Military members on active duty or in the selected reserve
- Former military members who served on active duty and departed under conditions other than dishonorable
- Former military members who completed at least one term of enlistment or period of initial obligated service in the selected reserve and departed under conditions other than dishonorable
- Former military members discharged from the selected reserve due to a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty

### Who is not eligible for military service honors?

- Any person separated from the Armed Forces under dishonorable conditions or whose character of service results in a bar to veteran's benefits
- Any person who was ordered to report to an induction station, but was not actually inducted into military service
- Any person discharged from the selected reserve prior to completing one term of enlistment or period of initial obligated service for reasons other than a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty
- Any person convicted of a federal or state capital crime sentenced to death or life imprisonment



There is additional information available at [www.cem.va.gov/pmc.htm](http://www.cem.va.gov/pmc.htm).

When burial or memorialization is in a national, post, or state veterans' cemetery, a headstone or marker will be ordered by the cemetery officials, based on inscription information provided by the next of kin. When burial is in a private cemetery, submit VA Form 40-1330, An application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veterans' Cemetery (can be found at [www.cem.va.gov/pdf/4001330.pdf](http://www.cem.va.gov/pdf/4001330.pdf)) may be submitted by the next of kin or a representative, such as a funeral director, cemetery official or veterans counselor, along with a copy of the veteran's military discharge documents, requesting a government-provided headstone or marker. Do not send original documents because they will not be returned.

For more information, go to <http://www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil/hnrs/owa/director.area>. At this site you will need an access code. The Department of Defense mailed out packets to funeral homes in 1999. If your firm did not receive your packet, you can fax a request on company letterhead to the Air Force Mortuary Affairs at 210-652-5809. The Air Force Mortuary Affairs is a point of contact for the information packets. This packet also contains a directory of Military Service phone numbers, a CD of Taps and information for families.

For more information about eligibility, visit <http://www.militaryfuneralhonors.osd.mil/law.html>

Members of the Commissioned Officer Corps of the Public Health Service (PHS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), as members of a uniformed service, are also eligible to receive funeral honors.

For NOAA personnel, eligibility is established using NOAA Form 56-16, Report of Transfer or Discharge. If the family does not have a copy of the NOAA Form 56-16, obtain it by contacting the Chief, Officer Services Division, NOAA Commissioned Personnel Center at (301) 713-3453, ext 102 or by writing:

National Oceanic and Atmospheric  
Administration  
Commissioned Personnel Center  
Chief, Officer Services Division (CPC1)  
1315 East-West Highway, Room 12100  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

For PHS personnel, funeral honors eligibility is established using PHS Form 1867, Statement of Service (equivalent to the DD Form 214). If the family does not have a copy of the Statement of Service, it may be obtained by contacting the Privacy Coordinator for the Commissioned Corps at (301) 594-3064 or writing:

Division of Commissioned  
Personnel/HRS/PSC  
Attention: Privacy Act Coordinator  
5600 Fishers Lane  
4-36  
Rockville, Maryland 20857

The families of PHS and NOAA decedents can request funeral honors through their funeral director. The funeral director will then contact the appropriate department at PHS or NOAA to arrange for the funeral honors detail.

A request for burial benefits can be downloaded from the Veterans Benefit Administration at <http://www.va.va.gov/pubs/candpforms.htm>.