

Veteran's Burial Benefits

Veterans and their spouses qualify for burial in Department of Veterans Affairs cemeteries nationwide. But thanks to bureaucratic rules, making arrangements for yourself ahead of time has been impossible. Literally. That's because in the past, the VA required that applications for VA burial eligibility be sent in "at the time of need" — in other words, after you're already dead. That meant the whole thing must be sorted out by family members. Now a new rule change means that the veteran can take care of the eligibility part of the VA burial benefits ahead of time. And since most of us want to be buried near our husbands or wives, it means you can take care of it, too.

This system will not let you choose exactly which cemetery you are buried in. Instead, you can state a preference. Actual location will depend on availability at "time of need" and still must be applied for by your family or through your funeral home. Here's what the VA burial benefits change does: The rule change allows veterans on their own behalf (or a designated agent) apply for burial benefits before they are actually needed, under a process known as pre-determination. You can read all about veteran burial pre-determination by going to <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2016/12/09/va-to-let-vets-preselect-cemetery-burials-before-death.html>.

Spouses aren't left behind on this one. Spouses qualify to be buried at a VA cemetery based off their veteran's eligibility. That means if the veteran can be buried there, so can you. VA officials said spouses can turn in an eligibility pre-determination form at the same time as the veteran — no need to wait for the veteran to be given the OK first. That means the spouse and their veteran can take care of all the paperwork at the same time on the same day. Planning for the inevitable is a good idea. You can find the VA burial benefits form for pre-determination at <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-10007.pdf>.
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