



Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Homes Noecker Family Funeral Homes

(928)445-2221

Serving Yavapai County since 1903

10 Important Facts About Your VA Burial Benefits

Because Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Homes serve more veterans than any other local funeral service provider, we understand veterans' needs, particularly when it comes to understanding and obtaining the burial benefits they've earned through the **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**.

We also know that many veterans may not fully understand the benefits to which they're entitled. Ruffner-Wakelin and its staff take the responsibility of helping veterans receive the benefits they deserve very seriously. For that reason, we've compiled this list of 10 Important Facts About Your VA Burial Benefits as a guide. For more information, or to obtain any necessary forms and paperwork, contact Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Homes to request a free **Veterans Planning Guide**.

10 Facts at a Glance

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits do not cover all the funeral or cremation arrangements of honorably discharged veterans.

1. **You will need documentation to verify military service.**
2. **A veteran's family must request a United States flag.**
3. **Military Funeral Honors ceremonies must be scheduled in advance.**
4. **Veterans' caskets are not free.**
5. **A "Presidential Memorial Certificate" must be requested.**
6. **If you choose not to be buried in a VA national cemetery, monetary burial benefits are limited.**
7. **There are eligibility requirements for burial in a VA national cemetery.**
8. **Headstones or markers for a burial space in a private cemetery must be requested.**
9. **The issuance or replacement of military service medals, awards and decorations must be requested in writing.**

Fact 1

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits do not cover all the funeral or cremation arrangements of honorably discharged veterans.

There are certain monetary, recognition and service benefits that may be available. However, reimbursement for funeral or cremation service expenses is limited, and usually only applies to veterans who:

- Retire from the Armed Services, or
- Were disabled due to a service-related injury, or
- Died in a VA hospital or while in a nursing home under VA contract

Standard guidelines are provided as an overview, but only the VA can rule on your exact benefits

Fact 2

You will need documentation to verify military service.

A "Report of Separation from the Armed Forces of the United States," also known as "discharge papers," is normally required to verify military service. In most cases, this report is the DD 214. If your family does not have form DD 214 at the time of death, any Davis Funeral Home and Memorial Park will be glad to help secure one.

Fact 3

A veteran's family must request a United States flag.

A flag is provided at no cost to drape the casket or accompany the urn of a deceased veteran. Generally, the flag is given to the next of kin. Only one flag may be provided per veteran. Upon the request of the family, an "Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes" (VA Form 21-2008) must be submitted along with a copy of the veteran's discharge papers. Flags may be obtained from VA regional offices and most U.S. Post Offices. For your family's convenience, your Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Homes will be glad to help them request your flag.

Fact 4

Military Funeral Honors ceremonies must be scheduled in advance.

The law requires that every eligible veteran receive a military funeral honors ceremony, which includes the folding and presentation of the United States flag and the playing of "taps," upon the family's request.

This Department of Defense program calls for the funeral director to request military funeral honors on behalf of the veteran's family. Your Davis Funeral Home and Memorial Park works with various veterans organizations to assist in the provision of military funeral honors.

Fact 5

Veterans' caskets are not free.

As a standard policy, neither the VA nor the various branches of service provide a free casket for a deceased veteran, unless death occurs while on active duty. As part of our service to veterans, Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Homes offer caskets and other merchandise at a discounted price to members of the American Legion and VFW.

Fact 6

A "Presidential Memorial Certificate" must be requested.

Initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy, a "Presidential Memorial Certificate" is an engraved paper certificate, signed by the current President, to honor the memory of honorably discharged, deceased veterans.

Eligible recipients, or someone acting on their behalf, may apply in person at any VA regional office or by U.S. mail. Your Davis Funeral Home and Memorial Park can assist your family in obtaining this certificate.

Your Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Director can assist your family in obtaining this certificate.

Fact 7

If you choose not to be buried in a VA national cemetery, monetary burial benefits are limited.

Veterans buried in a private cemetery may be eligible to receive a partial reimbursement for their burial costs. For non-service related deaths, a burial expense allowance (up to \$300) and a plot allowance (up to \$300) may be given. In order to receive a VA burial allowance you must meet the following conditions:

- Payment for the veteran's burial was made without any reimbursement from a government agency or other source, and
- Were disabled due to a service-related injury, or

In addition, at least one of the following conditions must be met:

- The veteran died because of service-related disability, or
- The veteran was receiving VA pension or compensation, or
- The veteran died in a VA hospital or nursing home under VA contract.

In order to determine the final reimbursement amount, an "Application for Burial Benefits" (VA Form 21-530) must be submitted within two years from the date of the veteran's permanent burial. If your family does not have the form 21-530 at the time of death, your Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Director will be glad to help secure one.

Fact 8

There are eligibility requirements for burial in a VA national cemetery.

Any member of the Armed Forces of the United States who dies while on active duty or any veteran who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable is entitled to burial in a VA national cemetery. Under certain conditions, the unremarried surviving spouse and minor children of an eligible person are also entitled to this benefit.

Burial in a VA national cemetery includes:

- An assigned gravesite (if space is available)
- Opening and closing of the grave
- A grave liner for casketed remains
- A government headstone or marker
- Perpetual care at no cost to the family

Cremated remains are buried or inurned in VA national cemeteries in the same manner and with the same honors as casketed remains.

It is important to note that you may not reserve space in a VA national cemetery ahead of time, since VA national cemeteries only allow arrangements to be made at the time of a death. Therefore, if you do not choose burial in a private cemetery, there is no guarantee that spouses or other family members will be buried side by side, or even nearby. Additionally, you should note that burials in VA national cemeteries usually are not conducted on weekends and, depending on the VA cemetery, there may be a waiting period before burial can occur.

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Fact 9

Headstones or markers for a burial space in a private cemetery must be requested.

The VA, upon request and at no charge to the applicant, will furnish a government headstone or marker for the grave of any deceased eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world. Upright headstones are available in granite and marble, and flat markers are available in granite, marble and bronze. The style must be consistent with existing monuments or markers at the place of burial. Niche markers for cremated remains are also available.

An "Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veteran's Cemetery" (VA Form 40-1330) must be submitted. If your family does not have form 40-1330 at the time of death, your Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Director will help secure one.

Fact 10

The issuance or replacement of military service medals, awards and decorations must be requested in writing.

Military service medals, awards and decorations are available from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). Family members may request medals and awards for living veterans only if they have obtained their signed authorization. For deceased veterans, requests will be accepted from the next-of-kin.

Requests should be submitted in writing to the appropriate military service branch division of the NPRC. Standard form (SF 180), available through the VA, is recommended to submit your request. Generally, there is no charge for medal or award replacements. For more information, or for the mailing address of the military branch office to submit your request to, call 1-86-NARA-NARA (1-866-272-6272) or visit the NPRC website at www.archives.gov. If your family does not have form SF 180 at the time of death, any Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Director will help secure one.

If your family does not have form SF 180 at the time of death, any Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Home and Crematory will be glad to help secure one.

At Ruffner-Wakelin Funeral Homes we are honored to be the provider of choice for the families of Yavapai County who have experienced a loss. As Arizona's Oldest Family owned and operated Funeral Home, we are knowledgeable of all options available for Veterans and their families.

Please stop by or phone to speak with one of our licensed professionals.

Noecker Family Funeral Homes & Crematory

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