



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

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Fact Sheet

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Facts about VA's National Cemeteries

National cemeteries are honored places in communities where deceased veterans receive perpetual care to commemorate their service as members of the U.S. armed forces. Most men and women who have served in the military are eligible for burial in a national cemetery, as are their dependent children and usually their spouses. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) manages the country's network of national cemeteries through its National Cemetery Administration.

Key Statistics

- VA maintains more than 2.5 million gravesites at 120 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, as well as in 33 soldier's lots and monument sites.
- Since 1973, annual interments in VA national cemeteries have increased from 36,400 to 89,750 in fiscal year (FY) 2003. Interments are expected to increase annually until 2008.
- The nation's most famous national cemetery – Arlington National Cemetery – is one of the few not run by VA. It is administered by the Army.
- More than 309,600 full-casket gravesites, 59,000 in-ground gravesites for cremated remains and more than 37,800 columbarium niches are available in already-developed areas of VA national cemeteries.
- There are approximately 14,200 acres within established national cemeteries. Just over half are undeveloped and – along with available gravesites in developed acreage -- have the potential to provide more than 3.6 million gravesites.
- Of the 120 national cemeteries, 60 are open to all interments; 23 can accommodate cremated remains and family members of those already interred; and 37 are closed to new interments but accommodate family members in already occupied gravesites.
- Seventy-four percent of interments in FY 2003 were in the 20 busiest national cemeteries: Riverside, Calif.; Calverton, N.Y.; Florida, in Bushnell; Fort Snelling in Minneapolis; Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis; Willamette in Portland, Ore.; Fort Logan in Denver; National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona in Phoenix; Houston; Fort Rosecrans in San Diego; Dallas-Ft. Worth; San Joaquin Valley in Gustine, Calif.; Tahoma in Kent, Wash.; Massachusetts in Bourne; Abraham Lincoln in Ellwood, Ill.; Long Island, N.Y.; Indiantown Gap in Annville, Pa.; Puerto Rico, in Bayamon; and Santa Fe, N.M.

- As of Sept. 30, 2003, six national cemeteries each contained more than 100,000 occupied gravesites, collectively accounting for 35 percent of all VA gravesites maintained: Long Island, N.Y. (241,825); Calverton, N.Y. (153,976); Fort Snelling in Minneapolis (134,756); Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis (120,602); Golden Gate in San Bruno, Calif. (112,035); and Riverside, Calif. (125,955).
- Largest national cemetery: Calverton, N.Y., 1,045 acres.
Smallest national cemetery: Hampton (Va.) at the VA Medical Center, .03 acres.
Oldest national cemetery: 14 established in 1862 (12 currently maintained by VA).
Newest national cemetery: Fort Sill in Elgin, Okla., opened in November 2001.
- Since 1973, VA has provided nearly 8.4 million headstones and markers. In FY 2003, VA provided more than 344,800 headstones and markers.
- VA provided more than 254,600 Presidential Memorial Certificates to the loved ones of deceased veterans in FY 2003.
- Since 1980, the State Cemetery Grants Program has awarded or obligated more than \$189 million to 30 states and Guam for the establishment, expansion or improvement of 54 state veterans cemeteries. In FY 2003, VA-supported state cemeteries provided more than 18,000 interments.
- Volunteers donated more than 315,200 hours at VA national cemeteries during FY 2003.
- More than 8.7 million people visited VA national cemeteries in FY 2003.
- In 1999 and 2003, with the passage of two laws, Congress directed VA to establish 12 new national cemeteries. One has been opened in Oklahoma. The rest – one in Alabama, two in California, three in Florida, one in Georgia, one in Michigan, two in Pennsylvania and one in South Carolina – will be located near large populations of veterans who currently do not have access to a burial option.

Veteran Statistics

Veterans' deaths are expected to peak at more than 676,000 in 2008. Based on census data, it is estimated that more than 655,000 veterans died in 2003. Historically, about 10 percent of U.S. veterans choose to be buried in VA national cemeteries. This percentage will increase with the recent opening of new national cemeteries.