



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Veterans Services
Policy and Procedure

Veterans Memorial Cemeteries

Title: **EOVS- Veterans Memorial Cemeteries**

Effective Date: **February 1, 2025**

Date Approved: **January 27, 2025**

Date Last Reviewed/Revised: **January 27, 2025**

Approved By: Kara Solimini, Assistant Secretary, Executive Office of Veterans Services

Purpose and Scope

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 115 §9A, this policy governs the operations at the Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemeteries.

Definitions

The following words and phrases shall have the meaning in 108 CMR 17.00 set forth as follows, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Application Form: Application for Interment Registration.

Chapel: non-sectarian building used for committal service only.

Columbarium Wall: a final, above ground resting place for cremated remains made of individual compartments built into the wall which will hold the urn containing cremated remains of up to three (3) individuals.

Committal Service: a burial ceremony lasting between 15 to 20 minutes in length, which includes the time needed for rendering of military honors. One clergy or family member is allotted 5 to 7 minutes to speak during this service.

Cremains: Cremated remains of a deceased person.

Dependent Child: A child of the veteran being interred. Dependent status may be shown through a birth certificate, adoption record or court order which names the eligible veteran as a parent and the child falls into one of the following categories:

1. Unmarried minor child, under 21 years of age, or 23 if pursuing a course of instruction at an approved educational institution, or
2. Unmarried adult child incapable of self-support with physical or mental disability if totally dependent upon the eligible veteran for support. A letter from

the Child's doctor or court documentation stating that child is totally dependent on veteran for support is required and must accompany the application.

Documentation of Military Service: Copies of all discharge papers (DD Form 214 or equivalent) for all years served. Copies of detailed pages (listing dates of entry, discharge, medals, and character of service) must be submitted. This includes DD Form 215 if any corrections were made to your discharge papers and/or a notarized affidavit regarding any discrepancies on your discharge (i.e., name spelled incorrectly, date of birth incorrect, Jr., Ill, etc. missing). This also includes all documentation of medals received if they are not listed on the veteran's DD Form 214. If a higher rank was obtained upon discharge from the Reserves/Guard, please provide a discharge letter or certificate.

Interment: Permanent disposition of the remains of a deceased person by burial.

Inurnment: Permanent disposition of the cremated remains of a deceased person by burial.

Monument Inscription Authorization Form: lists what will appear on the monument.

Military Service: any person who satisfies the National Cemetery Administration definition of veteran pursuant to 38 U.S.C 2402.

MVMC: Massachusetts Veterans Memorial Cemeteries located at 1390 Main Street, Agawam, MA 01001, (413) 821-9500, Fax (413) 821-9839 and 111 Glenallen Street, Winchendon, MA 01475, (978) 297-9501, Fax (978) 297-4271.

NCA: National Cemetery Administration

Next of Kin: a deceased person's closest living relative by blood or law: Surviving spouse, children and their dependents, parents, and siblings and their descendants. See G. L. c. 190B, §§ 2-102, 2-103, 2-106

Spouse: An individual specified as being married to a veteran and still legally married at the time of death. An individual may be considered a spouse if they are legally separated but not legally divorced at the time of death.

Eligibility

A veteran or dependent who satisfies the definition of under the NCA guidelines is eligible for burial in the MVMC.

Ineligibility

Pursuant to NCA guidelines, veterans are ineligible for burial in the MVMC if:

1. They've been convicted of a federal or state capital crime and may receive a sentence of imprisonment for life or the death penalty and the conviction is final, or
2. Clear and convincing evidence shows that they've committed a federal or state capital crime, but they couldn't have a trial due to flight to avoid prosecution or death.
3. Veterans convicted of certain sex offenses. Veterans aren't eligible if they were convicted of a Tier III sex offense and sentenced to a minimum of life imprisonment—and the conviction is final.
4. Veterans convicted of subversive activities. Veterans aren't eligible if they were convicted of subversive activities after September 1, 1959, unless they've received a pardon from the President of the United States.
5. Separated from the Armed Forces under dishonorable conditions or have a character of service that disqualifies them.

Fees

MVMC does not charge a fee for the initial burial of a veteran. A fee for full casket burial or a cremation burial may be charged for burial of spouse and qualified dependent(s). A fee may be charged for all dis-interments and/or re-interments. A fee may also be charged for the replacement cost to any damaged concrete crypt.

Services Provided

1. MVMC grounds are open from 7:00 a.m. until dusk every day. MVMC grounds may be closed for Committal Services based on weather conditions.
2. Administrative office hours will be clearly posted on site.
3. Burial records are confidential and may not be shared unless authorized by the veterans next of kin. A veteran, spouse or next of kin may review a file or request military records from a burial file only after providing proper photo identification. Proper documentation of status as next of kin such as a power of attorney, marriage certificate (if the spouse of the veteran) or long-form birth certificate (if a child of the veteran) must also be provided to access military records.
4. Committal Service and interments are held by appointment only, Monday through Friday, except on legal holidays.
5. MVMC will work with the legal next of kin to arrange a Committal Service, Internment and/or Inurnment.
6. MVMC will provide a Monument Inscription Authorization Form to the legal next of kin for approval. Changes to the Monument Inscription Authorization form must be provided within three days of submission to substantiate the change.
7. With written permission from the next of kin, a representative may bring cremated remains to MVMC at a scheduled date and time and sign a Monument Inscription Authorization form.

8. On the day of Committal Service, the next of kin will be provided with the deceased's burial documents. Once the casket or urn and up to 3 floral arrangements are in place, the family may enter the Chapel. The MVMC will sound "Taps" through the sound system. Upon completion of the Committal Service, visitors are kindly asked to pay their final respects and then leave MVMC to allow MVMC staff to complete burial procedures. The casket or cremated remains will be removed from the Chapel for immediate burial after the committal service and once the family has left MVMC. MVMC staff may place one small object with an urn in the Columbarium, to be buried beside an urn in-ground or inside the casket vault on top of the casket.
9. Government concrete vaults are preinstalled for full body burials. Double depth vaults will be used for a veteran and their spouse, with the first decedent interred in the bottom of the vault and subsequent decedent interred in the top-half of the double depth vault with a shelf between.
10. Gravesites are assigned and cannot be selected in advance. Assignments are made without regard to rank, ethnic or religious background, branch of service or other factors.
11. MVMC staff will not open caskets or urns.
12. Veterans and spouses must be interred in the same plot, with only a single headstone or niche cover allowed. The veteran's information will be on the front of the headstone and spouse's information on the back. If spouse predeceases the veteran, the spouse's information will be on the front of the headstone and after the death of the veteran, a new headstone will be engraved to place the veteran's information on the front and spouse's on back. Columbarium niche covers have veteran's and spouse's information on the front.
13. If both deceased spouses are veterans, they may request two different gravesites located side by side or have the option of burial in the same plot. Cremated remains options to inurn into the ground in designated sections of the cemetery or in our above ground columbaria.
14. MVMC staff will order a headstone/niche cover immediately after the committal service. Upright (granite) markers will be provided for in-ground (full casket or cremation) burials, granite niche covers will be engraved for the Columbarium wall. Private markers will not be allowed to be placed in the cemetery. MVMC staff will handle the ordering of headstone/niche covers. Headstones/niche covers will only be ordered after interment. Inscriptions will follow MVMC's rules and regulations. After the Committal Service, a headstone will be installed within 60 days if the Committal Service was held during growing season; burials that take place throughout the winter months headstones are held for install in the spring. Niche covers may be installed all year. Once the monument is installed, a postcard will be mailed to the next of kin with the grave location.
15. MVMC employees maintain all required licenses and certifications necessary for the function of their job.

Services Not Provided

1. MVMC staff are available during operating hours and not available after hours to schedule services or answer requests.
2. To preserve privacy and protect information, visitors and family members are not permitted in the Administration Offices. MVMC staff are instructed to not provide personal information over the telephone except for confirming whether a required document is missing.
3. Completion and approval of any MVMC Form does not automatically qualify or reserve a plot in the National Cemetery in Bourne or any other National, State or Tribal cemetery.
4. Specific gravesites or niches may not be reserved except for a spouse who is also a veteran or a dependent child of whom predeceases a parent or a parent of whom predeceases the child provided all required documentation is received and approved.
5. The MVMC does not provide caskets, cremation urns or vaults, cremation of decedent or any other funeral costs. MVMC Staff is only responsible for the interment process on MVMC grounds. In certain cases, with MVMC approval, urns may not be shipped to MVMC.
6. In-ground burial of cremated remains must be in an urn that will not deteriorate or must be placed in an urn vault. The funeral director will handle the urn vault ordering for you. MVMC does not offer any endorsement or suggestions on cremation vaults. No cardboard boxes allowed for either in-ground cremation or Columbarium Wall inurnments.
7. MVMC does not provide viewing facilities.
8. MVMC does not hold funeral services. The funeral or other service is held at the decedent's place of worship or at the funeral home.
9. It is the responsibility of the funeral director and/or family to provide clergy. It is the responsibility of the funeral director to arrange military funeral honors, but if the funeral home is out of state, or the family is arranging the Service, MVMC may request the veterans branch of service honor guard.
10. No graveside services are allowed.
11. No private funeral/committal services are allowed at MVMC at any time.
12. No receptions after services are allowed at MVMC.

Visitors

Visitors to MVMC are requested to use only the avenues, roads and paths, and should not walk on or across gravesites or lawns unless it is necessary to gain access to a particular grave. MVMC will not be responsible for any injuries or damages sustained by any person who has not obeyed this instruction or because of another visitor not obeying this instruction.

1. All vehicles shall respect posted speed limits, be kept to the right side of the

roadways, follow the direction of the roadways, and shall not be driven or parked on the lawns or on the Columbarium (Wall) brick area. All drivers are to follow all instructions from MVMC staff.

2. Florists are permitted to deliver flowers to a gravesite provided all boxes, wrapping paper or other packaging material is removed.
3. All persons at MVMC will conduct themselves in a manner respectful of a hallowed place. Persons violating reasonable standards of behavior will be subject to removal from MVMC. The following activities are examples, but not an exhaustive list of unacceptable behavior pursuant to this section:
 - No alcoholic beverages.
 - No drug use.
 - No smoking.
 - Any form of sport or recreation, including jogging, bicycle riding or riding of any motorized recreational vehicle, is prohibited.
 - No public gatherings of a partisan nature.
 - No littering, sunbathing, or picnicking.
 - No cutting, breaking, injuring, or otherwise altering trees, shrubs, grass, or other plantings.
 - No marking, defacing, or damaging headstones and/or niche covers in any way.
 - No display and/or sale of goods, wares, and merchandise.
 - No discharge of firearms, explosives or other dangerous or deadly weapons.
 - No act that prevents a MVMC employee from performing official duties.
 - No conducting of memorial service, ceremony, or tour without prior authorization from MVMC.
 - No broadcast audio unless MVMC approved.
4. Pets are not allowed at MVMC.
 - Service animals must be under the control of their handler.
 - We ask that approved animal handlers to be respectful of the grounds and gravesites when walking around the grounds with their approved animals.
 - Service animals are defined as animals that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.

Decorations

(1) Floral arrangements may be delivered to the MVMC office on the day of a Committal Service or brought at the time and day of the Committal Service to the MVMC Chapel. MVMC staff will bring the floral arrangements to the gravesite after the committal service. MVMC staff will have discretion to remove floral arrangements when they become withered, faded, or otherwise unsightly. Weather affects how long floral tributes remain in good condition. All authorized and unauthorized items placed on gravesites will be removed and disposed of at the discretion of MVMC personnel. The placement of floral items on graves, other than on the day of interment, is subject to the following conditions:

- a. Fresh cut natural flowers are permitted at any time and must be placed in a MVMC provided plastic cone vase, which may not be removed from MVMC.

- Flowers may be removed at any time at MVMC staff's discretion.
- b. On Mother's Day, Memorial Day and Father's Day, a potted plant, no larger than 8 inches round, will be permitted on the gravesite 5 days before and 5 days following Mother's Day, Memorial Day and Father's Day.
 - c. On Memorial Day, MVMC will place a United States Flag on each gravesite, traditionally, the Wednesday before the holiday and will remove flags the Wednesday after Memorial Day.
 - d. On Veterans Day, individuals may place United States, POW/MIA or Armed Forces Service Branch flags no larger than 12 x 17 inches on individual gravesites from November 6th to November 12th. MVMC staff will pick up any flags not picked up by the end of the day on November 12th, and the flags will become MVMC property.
 - e. Freshly cut evergreen arrangements (containing no more than one bow) are allowed from November 1st through January 15th. Evergreen arrangements are not to be attached in any way to the headstone. Evergreen arrangements should be placed at the base of headstones and/or columbarium walls.
 - f. Funeral flowers may be removed within three days following the funeral at any time of the year.
 - g. Flowers placed on gravesites on a Friday or weekend may be removed on a Monday if they are unsightly, withered, or when it becomes necessary to facilitate MVMC's operations such as mowing.

(2) To ensure the safety of all who visit, the following are prohibited on MVMC's grounds:

- a. No artificial flowers at any time of year.
- b. No cemetery logs, window boxes, or potted plants (except as stated above).
- c. No pinecones, branches, berries, palms, potted plants/dirt in cone vases.
- d. No permanent plantings, floral containers, balloons, pinwheels, beverage containers, commemorative items, coins, pictures, statues, candles, flammable items of any sort, vigil lights and breakable objects.
- e. Prohibited items include, but are not limited to ammunition, alcohol, knives or sharp objects, statues, vigil lights, flags, glass objects of any nature, and any type of commemorative items.
- f. No grave blankets or grave pillows.
- g. No flags (other than those placed by MVMC personnel or subject to the Veterans Day exemption) are permitted, including placement in the provided plastic cone vases. The large United States, POW/MIA, and Branch of Service Flags flown at the Cemeteries provide year-round honor to all veterans buried in the cemeteries.
- h. No flag standards or grave medallions.
- i. No decorations of any type are allowed to be attached to, lean against, or placed on top of a headstone or niche cover.

Corrections

MVMC reserves the right to take appropriate actions (up to and including legal actions and/or disinterment from cemetery grounds) because of findings of falsification, fraud, or misrepresentation on the part of a veteran or next of kin.