

VA BURIAL BENEFIT UPDATE 01: Often survivors are disappointed when they seek reimbursement of burial expenses for departed veterans. This is because retirees have not informed their loved ones what to do and how much to expect in the event of their demise. The following is the maximum benefits currently payable by the VA:

1. VA will provide headstones or markers to memorialize veterans or mark the graves of veterans buried in national, state, or private cemeteries as well as those whose remains have not been recovered or identified. This includes those buried at sea, those remains donated to science, and those cremated and whose cremated remains were scattered without burying any portion of them. VA will also provide markers for eligible family members interred in a national or State Veteran's Cemetery. When interment is in a private cemetery, the cemetery may require, and charge for, a foundation for the marker and installation of the marker. Such costs must be paid from private funds.
2. VA may provide \$300 toward the burial expenses of retired veterans who are eligible for VA pension or compensation and for those who die in VA medical facilities. An additional \$150 gravesite or interment allowance may be paid if a retired veteran served during a war period and is not buried in a national cemetery or other Government cemetery.
3. If a retired veteran's death is deemed to be service-connected, VA will pay an amount not to exceed \$2,000 in lieu of the usual burial and gravesite allowance.
4. VA will provide an American flag, upon request, for covering the casket; and a memorial certificate, bearing the President's signature, expressing our Nation's grateful recognition of the deceased veteran's service.
5. In addition to VA burial benefits, the surviving spouse or eligible child of a retired Soldier may be eligible for a \$255 lump-sum death benefit from Social Security. Local Social Security Offices have details.

As determined by the VA, the phrase "entitled to receive" includes only those veterans who have been awarded VA compensation or pension or who have submitted an application [VA Form 21-526] that is pending at the time of the veteran's death that would have subsequently been approved. It does not apply automatically to military disability retirees. To qualify for payment, a military retiree must have applied for VA compensation and have been determined to be entitled for the benefit. The fact that a retiree chose not to waive all or part of his retirement pay after being awarded VA compensation does not disqualify the proper claimant(s) from receiving the appropriate allowance. This change has no affect on payment of the burial allowance where death is adjudged subsequently by the VA to be service connected. For veterans [U.S. or USAFFE] who die in the Philippines to receive burial benefits the veteran had to be in receipt of VA benefits or entitled to receive VA benefits at the time of death. If te veteran died in the States and was a US citizen he did not have to be in receipt of VA benefits if his income and net worth were under the income limits set for NSC pension. The time limit for filing for burial benefits is two years after burial or other final disposition. Any person who was retired for disability should seriously consider filing a claim with the VA to establish eligibility for disability compensation so that ultimately payment for burial allowance may be made to survivors. VA Form 21-526 is used for filing for disability compensation and VA Form 21-534 is used when

filing claims for burial compensation. Both may be obtained from the nearest VA office. RAO Baguio also can provide these forms and forward them to Manila if desired. For more information on VA burial benefits, contact any VA office 1(800) 827-1000 [1-800 1-888 5252 if outside Manila in the Philippines] or national cemetery; or refer to: <http://www.cem.va.gov/>. [Source: RAO Baguio Feb 08 ++]