

Date: May 1, 2020

From: Executive Director, VA Service and Distribution Center (003B6D2)

Subj: Memorandum 796-20-01, Guidance for the Distribution and Replenishment of Burial Flags

To: US Postal Service Postmasters; Directors, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Regional Offices (VARO), National Cemeteries (NCA) and VA Medical Centers (VAMC)

1. Purpose: This memorandum provides instructions to VA medical centers, cemeteries, regional offices and United States Post Offices for facilitating the storage and distribution of burial flags for VA by the VA Service and Distribution Center (SDC), Hines, IL, and rescinds SDC Memorandum 796-13-01: Guidance for the Distribution and Replenishment of Burial Flags. It is intended to provide the necessary information and points of contact for this program. The instructions in this memorandum provide significant changes supporting US Post Offices, while internal VA office procedures remain largely unchanged.

2. Obtaining a Flag:

a. Applicants seeking a burial flag will be required to submit a completed copy of VA Form 27-2008, Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes and attach a copy of DD 214, Certificate of Release or Discharged from Active Duty; or other documentation that contains acceptable evidence of the eligibility of the deceased Veteran whenever possible. The most current version of VA Form 27-2008 and further information may be downloaded at the SDC website:

<http://www.va.gov/oal/government/sdc/burialFlags.asp>

IMPORTANT NOTE: The issue of a flag may not be delayed or refused because appropriate documentation is not available at the time of request.

b. VA is committed to furnishing burial flags to drape the caskets of deceased Veterans who were honorably discharged from the military. When flag eligibility is in doubt, the nearest VA office may be contacted for assistance in clarifying the deceased Veteran's status; however, due to time sensitivity, a properly completed 27-2008 verifying eligibility will be accepted.

c. Normally the family of the deceased Veteran or a funeral director acting on their behalf may apply for the flag. A flag may be issued after interment when circumstances prevent securing one prior to a funeral or interment ceremony. There is no time limit for request of a flag. Only one flag may be issued for each deceased Veteran.

3. Initial Issue and Replenishment Process for Post Offices:

a. Post offices will accept VA Form 27-2008, Application for United States Flag for Burial Purposes, ensuring all appropriate information is completed, and issue one flag per veteran. Under no circumstances should flags be issued without a properly completed form. Forms must be completed by the post office, and mailed **within three days of receipt** to:

Memorial Programs Service (41A1)
Department of Veterans Affairs
5109 Russell Road
Quantico, VA 22134-3903

b. All issuing post offices are initially supplied with an operating inventory of flags based upon demand and other local conditions. An initial supply of flags for new issuing offices should be obtained by requesting an initial stock from the USPS MDC.

c. Orders for burial flags will be placed using eBuy+ (NSN 8345-00-656-1432) and fulfilled by the Material Distribution Center (MDC) in accordance with the 2020 Post Office Burial Flag Replenishment SOP.

4. Replenishment Process for VA Offices:

a. VA Regional Offices and Medical Centers will continue to order and issue flags but will **not** resupply post offices. Flag applications received from post offices will be forwarded to the FNOD office only.

b. Issuing offices will forward a completed VA Form 27-2008 to the Memorial Programs Service office listed above within three days of issue.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Any VA facility which receives, and processes VA Form 27-2008 are required to forward the completed form and accompanying documentation to FNOD as quickly as possible

c. All VA offices with access to FPOrders will replenish their own supply of burial flags (stock number F91432) by placing orders utilizing the FPOrders system referred to above. This ordering system is available by means of an on-line computer session with the VA Austin Automation Center. All orders will be filled and shipped within 4 workdays of receipt. National cemeteries and VAROs are also eligible to establish an FPOrders account and receive direct shipments of flags from the SDC.

6. Distribution from the Service and Distribution Center (SDC):

- a. The VA distributes on average 500,000 burial flags annually from the SDC to VA and USPS components at multiple locations across the country.
- b. The supply chain begins with the SDC receiving interment flags based on pre-determined delivery schedules established in conjunction with VA contracts solicited and awarded by the Office of Acquisition and Logistics in VA Central Office. Contracts are awarded to a variety of flag manufacturers who produce high quality flags in accordance with Federal Specification DDD-F-416F and/or Commercial Description A-A-52696 dated August 5, 2006.
- c. The SDC will maintain, on average, a 6-month supply of flags in its warehouse located in Building 37 of the Hines, Illinois, VA campus in accordance with the Intra-agency Support Agreement (IAA) between SDC and VHA. This inventory level is deemed adequate to compensate for any potential disruptions in the production of the flags (i.e. plant fires, material shortages, etc). Flags are then supplied by the SDC to VA offices and facilities and to the USPS MDC in Topeka Kansas for insertion into the USPS supply chain. The USPS MDC orders flags via email notification in quantities enough to maintain a 30-day inventory of flags.
- d. VA offices place orders with the SDC Operations Division utilizing the online FPOrders program. Where necessary, and with concurrence of the Chief of the SDC, faxes, e-mails, phone calls or written requests for replenishment may be allowed but use of FPOrders is the preferred method. Orders will be shipped within 4 business days to the requesting facility either via common carrier, FedEx ground or other suitable means of shipment based on quantity. Overnight emergency shipments are at the discretion of SDC management.

7. Flags for Training Purposes:

Flags with minor defects rendering them unsuitable for issue to the families of Veterans are available from the SDC and may be provided to Veterans Service Groups, National Guard and Active Duty Burial Detachments, or other organizations providing military honors for Veteran's funerals. Training Flags will be clearly marked "for training use only" and may be ordered by contacting the SDC via email or by telephone.

8. Unserviceable or Returned Flags:

- a. Flags received at a post office damaged or with obvious manufacturing defects should be returned for direct replacement to:

VA Service and Distribution Center
Attention: Chief of Operations
Bldg. 37
1st Ave 1 Block North of Cermak
Hines, IL 60141

b. Flags rendered unserviceable through wear and tear should be disposed of locally IAW U.S. Code, Title 4, Chapter 1, Section 8; preferably by burning. There is no provision for issuing more than one flag per Veteran, or replacements for damaged or lost flags.

9. Contact Information:

The VA SDC Enterprise Distribution Division; Hines, Illinois may be contacted for assistance by sending an e-mail message to Flags.Interment@va.gov , or in an emergency by phoning (708) 786-7758 or 7509. If necessary, the SDC Director's Office may also be contacted at (708) 786-7502/7505.

USPS Material Distribution Center: may be contacted via email MDC.CustomerService@usps.com Or by phone to MDC (800)332-0317, Option 4, Option 4

10. References:

VBA Fast Letter 09-23, Transfer of Burial Flag Application Processing to the National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

VA Pamphlet 21-02-1, VA Benefits for Survivors

VA M21-1MR, Part VII, Chapter 5, Section B

VA Form 27-2008 dated June 2018

USPS Administrative Support Manual (ASM) 13, Section 474, U.S. Burial Flags

Intra-agency Cross-Servicing Support Agreement (VA Form 2269) between SDC and VBA for acquisition, distribution and storage of burial flags dated April 2020

Neal W. Kemp
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Office of Acquisition and Logistics

Attachment 1 Burial Flag Replenishment Flow Chart

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