

U.S. COAST GUARD BURIAL AT SEA PROGRAM

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UNITED STATES FEDERAL REGULATIONS ON BURIAL AT SEA

Burials at sea are regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), not by the Coast Guard. Anyone may perform burials at sea as long as they meet the requirements of section 229.1 of Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations. [40 CFR 229.1]

See <http://www.epa.gov/region4/water/oceans/documents/burialcode.pdf> . The EPA regulation identifies prohibited zones.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF BURIAL AT SEA PROGRAM

Burial-at-Sea is a means of final disposition of human remains. Per longstanding policy the Coast Guard will provide burial at sea for cremated remains (ashes) of military personnel, dependents, and civilians. Military honors are provided when appropriate. The Coast Guard will not normally provide burial at sea for caskets with intact human remains. Burial of cremated remains may be performed by boats, ships, or aircraft of the Coast Guard. See COMDTINST M1770.9, Military Casualties and Decedent Affairs, section 2.Q.

Family members are not routinely present for the burial ceremony. The Coast Guard unit providing the burial may be diverted to other tasking without having the chance to return family members ashore, or weather or mechanical issues may dictate changes to plans. Presence of family members is at the sole discretion of the commanding officer of a cutter or the commander responsible for a boat or aircraft involved.

After burial at sea the commander or commanding officer concerned will notify the deceased's family in writing. Report the date, time, latitude and longitude of the burial. The same information will be sent to EPA to comply with section 229.1.

ELIGIBILITY FOR BURIAL AT SEA

COMDTINST M1770.9, MILITARY CASUALTIES & DECEDENT AFFAIRS, SECTION 2.Q (REPLACED PERSMAN CHAPTER 11)

Eligible are "military personnel, dependents of military personnel, and civilians." *Civilian* is not limited in any way.

ELIGIBILITY FOR MILITARY HONORS

Per ALCOAST 016/11 of 19 Jan 2011, the Coast Guard provides funeral honors for qualified Coast Guard veterans. For a burial at sea the same honors will be provided for qualified veterans of any service. A "qualified veteran" is defined at sections 4.7 and E2.11 of Department of Defense Instruction 1300.15, Military Funeral Support. While the documented character of service is significant, in rare cases a veteran may become disqualified based on post-service criminal activity. Not all criminal activity is disqualifying. Denial of MFH under these provisions has been delegated to Commander, Personnel Service Center for Coast Guard veterans. For veterans of other services when a question arises, the decision to deny honors is made only by the parent service.

A "QUALIFIED VETERAN" FOR MILITARY HONORS IS:

- Anyone who served on active duty or in the reserve forces of a Uniformed Service. No minimum period of service is defined. The veteran must have been:
 - Regular, reserve or guard member of the Uniformed Services, including cadets and midshipmen.
 - Retirees of the Uniformed Services (regular retirement; temporary or permanent disability retirement; any non-regular retired status for a Reservist).
 - Discharged or released with honorable discharge, or general discharge under honorable conditions.
- The Uniformed Services are the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration.
- World War II merchant seamen who served in harm's way. Veteran status will be documented by a DD-214 issued by the National Maritime Center in Martinsburg WV. Some other WWII groups also earned veteran status.

ALTERNATIVE SOURCES: U.S. NAVY OR COMMERCIAL PROVIDER

The U.S. Navy also has a burial at sea program. For details see <http://www.navy.mil/navydata/questions/burial.html> .

In some places there are commercial entities that provide burial at sea.

REQUEST AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

After the death of the individual for whom the request for Burial-at-Sea is being made, the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition (PADD) may complete the enclosed Burial-at-Sea worksheet or provide a letter with the same information. Supporting documents which must accompany the request are:

- A legible copy of the death certificate;
- The cremation certificate; and
- (Military only) A copy of form DD-214, or equivalent discharge certificate or retirement order, or form DD-1300.

The PADD is the person designated on form CG-2020D for Coast Guard members, or on form DD-93 for military members of DOD services. For civilians the PADD is a matter of state law. Usually the PADD for a civilian is the first person from the hierarchy of: spouse or partner, natural children, parents, siblings, or other relatives.

PACKAGING OF CREMAINS FOR SHIPMENT

Cremated remains (also known as “cremains” or ashes) must be packaged to prevent spillage in shipment. The normal packaging used by crematories and funeral homes should be adequate. Packaging should be disposable since it will not be returned. A suitably dignified container may be made of any material.

- Some very nice packaging is made from paper cellulose or cardboard-type material.
- A relatively new option is an urn made of salt, which dissolves when dropped in the ocean. Salt urns are easy to handle. They are very neat, even on a windy day.
- Plastic materials cannot be placed in the ocean.

The Coast Guard strongly recommends shipment by secure, traceable means such as Certified Mail, “Return Receipt Requested.”

BURIAL FLAG

If the deceased is a qualified veteran for whom military honors will be provided, a burial flag should accompany the cremains. The burial flag will be used to drape the urn during the ceremony.

If a burial flag is provided with cremains, the same flag will be folded and returned to the PADD.

If no flag is provided, the ship, boat or aircraft will use a flag from regular onboard stock, and will retain the flag onboard for continued use after the ceremony.

INTACT HUMAN REMAINS (CASKETED REMAINS)

The Coast Guard does not normally bury intact, casketed remains at sea. No Coast Guard ship was built with sufficient clearance to maneuver a casket into and out of an appropriately refrigerated space at sea.

The U.S. Navy does have suitable facilities and may consider a burial at sea request for a qualified veteran.

Burial at sea of intact remains will be considered only with prior approval by a Coast Guard vice admiral or higher authority.

All burials at sea have regulatory requirements for minimum distance from land. In addition, for intact human remains, final disposition is subject to a minimum ocean depth of 100 fathoms (600 feet) in most locations, or a minimum of 300 fathoms (1,800 feet) in the vicinity of Florida and offshore from the Mississippi Delta. See 40 CFR 229.1 for technical details.

FEES AND EXPENSES

The Coast Guard does not charge any fee for the final service of burial at sea. The Coast Guard will not incur fees on behalf of the deceased, other than normal movement of ships, boats and aircraft. For example, the Coast Guard will not provide a wreath to be laid at sea, but will lay a wreath if provided by next of kin.

BURIAL-AT-SEA COORDINATORS

Prior to shipment, please call the Burial-At-Sea Coordinator during normal business hours to discuss details. You may call any Coordinator to discuss. Or, pick a specific coordinator based on where you prefer the burial to be performed.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Point of Contact</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Boston MA	CWO Armistead	617-223-3468	
Portsmouth VA	CWO Belger	757-686-4116	
Miami FL	YNCM Navarro	305-535-4556	
New Orleans LA	CWO Robinson	504-253-4793	
St. Louis MO	CWO Meyer	314-269-2321	No local burials. Coordination only.
Cleveland OH	YNCM Gordy	216-902-6302	
Los Angeles/Long Beach CA	YNCS Silva Jr.	310-521-6082	
Alameda CA	CWO Linayao	510-437-3712	
Seattle WA	CWO Watson	206-217-6407	
Honolulu HI	CWO Fikac	808-842-2012	
Ketchikan AK	YNCM Tuchman	907-228-0218	
Kodiak AK	CWO Jacobs	907-487-5170	
Washington DC	CWO Tennyson	202-372-4010	No local burials. Coordination only.
USCG program manager	LT Arumae	703-872-6647	Referrals only, to local Coordinators.

ADVANCE REQUESTS

Burial-At-Sea Coordinators will be happy to discuss burial at sea details prior to a person's death. If this is of concern, please choose a coordinator and call.

If you have specific ideas about your wishes or those of a family member you can discuss them with one of the Coordinators. However, the Coast Guard does not maintain advance files on burial at sea wishes. That is a family matter. Talk to them so they know what you want.

SPEEDINESS OF BURIALS AT SEA

Some burials at sea are arranged and completed in as little as a week. Burials associated with special requests may wait for months because a particular ship is deployed, or is in the shipyard, etc. Most burials are completed in two weeks to two months from the date of the completed request and delivery of cremains.

CONDUCTING A BURIAL AT SEA

COMDTINST M5000.3B, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD REGULATIONS 1992, SECTIONS 14-10-3.H & I

"During burial at sea, the ship shall be stopped, if practicable, and the ensign shall be displayed at half-mast from the beginning of the funeral service until the body has been committed to the deep. Further display of the ensign at half-mast may be prescribed, according to circumstances, by the senior officer present." {14-10-3.H}

Per Coast Guard Regulations, burial at sea must be conducted in accordance with the environmental regulations at 40 CFR 229.1. [14-10-3.I]

- "Burial at sea of cremated remains must take place beyond the limit of the territorial sea, but without regard to depth limitations." [14-10-3.I(2)]
- "Flowers and wreaths consisting of materials which are readily decomposable in the marine environment may be disposed of at the site at which disposal of human remains is authorized." [14-10-3.I(3)]

SALUTING

COMDTINST M5000.3B, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD REGULATIONS 1992, SECTIONS 14-10-3.F

“Persons in the Coast Guard shall salute when:

- The body is carried past them;
- While the body is being lowered into the grave or committed to the deep; and
- During the firing of volleys and the sounding of ‘Taps’.”

SPECIAL REQUESTS

Burials at sea occasionally involve special requests. The Coast Guard may accommodate a special request that does not create extra work. Some examples of special requests that have been honored:

- Burial in the Gulf Stream while a Coast Guard cutter was passing through the area.
- Burial from an aircraft (common for naval aviators, uncommon for others).
- Burial from a particular ship—usually because the person served aboard that ship or a ship of the same name.
- Burial along a particular piece of the coast—because the person enjoyed surfing or fishing there.

CENOTAPHS AND HEADSTONES

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) furnishes upon request, at no charge to the applicant, a Government headstone or marker for the unmarked grave of any deceased eligible Veteran in any cemetery around the world, regardless of their date of death.

Graves may be “unmarked” for different reasons. A very old grave may be rediscovered. Or, a very new grave may not yet have any permanent marker.

More information is available at http://www.cem.va.gov/hm_hm.asp.

When a person is buried at sea there is no grave ashore, and no “headstone” because the stone cannot be set at the head end of the grave. When there are no remains actually buried in the ground the marker is a “cenotaph.” A headstone and a cenotaph look exactly the same. It is a technical difference, obviously important to those who manage cemeteries. A marker requested from VA can be for a headstone or for a cenotaph.

Burial At Sea

PROCESS WORKSHEET: REQUEST & APPROVAL FOR BURIAL AT SEA

Per longstanding policy the Coast Guard provides burial at sea for cremated remains (ashes) of military personnel, dependents, and civilians, using boats, ships or aircraft of the Coast Guard. Military honors are provided when appropriate. The Coast Guard does not normally provide burial at sea for caskets with intact human remains. Burials at sea must meet the requirements of section 229.1 of Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). See COMDTINST M1770.9, Military Casualties and Decedent Affairs, section 2.Q.

Request made by	1. Name	_____
	2. Address	_____
	3. Phone	_____
	4. Email	_____
	5. Relationship to deceased	_____
Burial at sea requested for	6. Name	_____
	7. Cause of death	_____
	8. Date of death	_____
	9. Date of birth	_____
	10. SSN	_____
	11. Religious preference	_____
Certification of Requestor	12. If military veteran: service, dates, & character of service	_____
	I certify the information provided is accurate.	
	I am the person having the legal right to direct the disposition of the person identified above.	
	I understand the U.S. Coast Guard is not responsible for the costs of cremation, inurnment, or shipping.	
	I authorize the U.S. Coast Guard to perform the burial at sea as requested.	
13. Sign & date	_____	
Burial At Sea Coordinator	14. Name	_____
	15. Phone	_____
	16. Fax	_____
	17. Email	_____
Unit assigned	18. Unit	_____
	19. Name of point of contact	_____
	20. Phone	_____
	21. Fax	_____
	22. Email	_____
Burial ceremony	23. Date cremains received	_____
	24. Date & time committed to sea	_____
	25. Latitude	_____
	26. Longitude	_____
	27. Date of report to PADD	_____
	28. Date of report to EPA	_____
	29. Date closed with BAS Coordinator	_____

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

(when filled in)