

Supporting Statement for
Generic Clearance for the National Cemetery Administration, Customer Satisfaction
Surveys
(2900-0571)

A. Justification

1. In response to Executive Order 12862, the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) will conduct surveys to determine the level of satisfaction with existing services among their customers. The surveys will solicit voluntary opinions and are not intended to collect information required to obtain or maintain eligibility for a VA program or benefit. Baseline data obtained through these information collections is to be used to validate customer service standards. This submission requests the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to:

a. Grant the organizations a three-year extension of its generic clearance approval authority;

b. Allow them to establish a maximum number of annual burden hours against which burden will be charged for each survey actually used; and

c. Allow for the submission of a summary of objectives, specific burden estimates, and all final or near final survey instruments (focus group scripts, test questions, etc.) covered by the generic clearance for inclusion in the OMB public docket prior to their use.

2. The NCA will continue to conduct customer satisfaction surveys under this generic clearance to implement the Executive Order. If the surveys were not conducted, the organizations would be unable to comply with the Executive Order, and would not have the information needed to improve established standards for the best possible customer-focused service. They will use the information gathered to determine where and to what extent services are satisfactory, and where and to what extent they are in need of improvement. The information may lead to policy changes to improve overall operations. Participation in the surveys will be voluntary and the generic clearance will not be used to collect information required to obtain or maintain eligibility for a VA program or benefit. In addition, voluntary customer surveys will not be used as substitutes for traditional program evaluation surveys that measure objective outcomes. In order to maximize the voluntary response rates, the information collection will be designed to make participation convenient, simple, and free of unnecessary barriers. The NCA anticipate the surveys will identify those aspects of services that are most important to their customers. OMB will be consulted regarding any changes made to the information collection during this approval period.

3. Information technology will be used wherever possible to reduce the information collection burden these activities place on the public.

4. The NCA will use VA's internal review process to examine each information collection to prevent duplication of effort or redundancy in information collected. No information currently being collected in VA can be used to meet the requirements of the Executive Order. The information to be gathered from the surveys as a whole is unique and not available from any other sources.

5. Small businesses, such as directors of funeral homes, are involved in this collection of information.

6. Most customer satisfaction surveys are recurring so that ongoing measures can be created to measure performance and to determine how well the agency meets customer service standards. The burden consists only of that information which is essential to maintain the validity and accomplish the goals of the Executive Order. The NCA will use a variety of activities including focus groups and surveys to gauge customer perceptions of VA services as well as customer expectations and desires. The results of these information collections should lead to improvements in the quality of the NCA service delivery by helping to shape the directions and focus of specific programs and services.

7. There are no special circumstances that require the collection of information to be conducted in a manner that is inconsistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.6.

8. The agency notice was published in the Federal Register on September 14, 2006, Volume 71, Number 178. The notice solicited comments relating to the organizations' customer satisfaction survey proposals. No comments have been received.

9. There are no plans to provide payments or gifts to respondents. However, participants in focus groups may be reimbursed for travel expenses.

10. The identities of individuals and organizations contacted will be carefully protected. Names and personal identifiers will be used to locate survey participants and will thereafter be stripped from any files kept for analysis purposes.

11. Questions of a sensitive nature will not be asked.

12. Estimate of the Respondent Burden:

Most customer satisfaction surveys will be recurring so that the National Cemetery Administration can create and maintain ongoing measures of performance and to determine how well the administration meets the requirements of its customer service standards. Each collection of information will consist of the minimum amount of information necessary to determine customer needs and to evaluate the organization's performance. NCA expects to conduct 15 focus groups annually involving a total of 450 hours annually during the approval period. In addition, NCA expects to conduct mail surveys with a total annual burden of 12,000 hours and will distribute Comment Cards with a total annual burden of 208 hours. NCA also plans to conduct mail surveys with

customers of specific programs (e.g. Headstones and Markers, Presidential Memorial Certificates, State Veterans Cemeteries) to determine levels of service satisfaction. Program specific surveys are estimated at 500 burden hours annually during the approval period. The IG will distribute written surveys with a total annual burden of 167 hours.

I. National Cemetery Administration Focus Groups

National Cemetery Administration Focus Groups with Next of Kin (5 groups/10 participants per group/3 hours each session)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
2007	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2008	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2009	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually

National Cemetery Administration Focus Groups with Funeral Directors (5 groups/10 participants per group/3 hours each session).

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
2007	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2008	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2009	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually

National Cemetery Administration Focus Groups with Veterans Service Organizations (5 groups/10 participants per group/3 hours each session).

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
2007	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2008	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually
2009	50	150 hours	5 Groups Annually

II. National Cemetery Administration Visitor Comment Cards (Local Use)

National Cemetery Administration Visitor Comments Cards (2,500 respondents/5 minutes per card)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2007	2,500	208 hours	Annually
2008	2,500	208 hours	Annually

2009	2,500	208 hours	Annually
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III. National Cemetery Administration Mail Surveys

National Cemetery Administration Next of Kin National Customer Satisfaction Survey
(Mail, 15,000 respondents/30 minutes per survey)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2007	15,000	7,500 hours	Annually
2008	15,000	7,500 hours	Annually
2009	15,000	7,500 hours	Annually

National Cemetery Administration Funeral Directors National Customer Satisfaction Survey
(Mail, 4,000 respondents/30 minutes per survey)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2007	4,000	2000	Annually
2008	4,000	2000	Annually
2009	4,000	2000	Annually

National Cemetery Administration Veterans-At -Large National Customer Satisfaction Survey
(Mail 5,000 respondents/30 minutes per survey)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2007	5,000	2,500 hours	Annually
2008	5,000	2,500 hours	Annually
2009	5,000	2,500 hours	Annually

IV. Program/Specialized Service Survey

National Cemetery Administration Program/Specialized Service Survey (Mail, 2,000 surveys/15 minutes each)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2007	2,000	500 hours	Annually
2008	2,000	500 hours	Annually
2009	2,000	500 hours	Annually

V. Office of Inspector General

Community Based Outpatient Clinic Patient Survey (1,000 respondents/10 minutes per response)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>	<u>Estimated Annual Burden</u>	<u>Frequency of Response</u>
2007	1,000	167 hours	Annually
2008	1,000	167 hours	Annually
2009	1,000	167 hours	Annually

13. Estimated Cost to the Respondents. The total cost to the respondents is \$199,875(13,325 x \$15.00).

14. Estimated Cost to the Federal Government:

At this time, the organizations cannot estimate the cost of this effort to the Federal Government; however, each will incur internal administrative costs in developing, printing, and mailing survey instrument, and in data analysis and reporting results.

15. The burden hour decrease is due to a change in the number of prospective survey participants.

16. The results obtained from these information collections will be disseminated to key policy and management officials, VA employees, the Congress, and the public.

17. Survey instruments do not display an expiration date and if required to do so, would result in unnecessary waste of the existing stock. For this reason, VA continues to seek an exemption that waives the displaying of the expiration date.

18. There are no exceptions to the "Certification of Paperwork Reduction Act Submission."