

# National Cemetery Administration

National Shrine Commitment

Operational Standards and Measures Guidebook



*February 2021*

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## **Introduction**

This document sets forth the National Cemetery Administration's (NCA) standards for performance in the key cemetery operational areas which have been approved and endorsed by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs and other NCA senior managers.

## **Scope**

Each standard is supported by measures that are used to gauge success at meeting the established standards. Several standards may require geographically defined Standard Operating Procedures to account for variances in climate, topography, and soil conditions throughout the system.

The standards and measures in this document should be considered as goals and requirements for the performance of key operational processes and should be applied at both open and closed national cemeteries where work is done by either a Federal or contract workforce.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of these standards is to provide guidance and direction for maintaining national cemeteries as the shrines they are intended to be and as defined below:

*A national shrine is a place of honor and memory that declares to the visitor or family member who views it that, within its majestic setting, each Veteran may find a sense of serenity, historic sacrifice and nobility of purpose. Each visitor should depart feeling that the grounds, the gravesites and the environs of the national cemetery are a beautiful and awe-inspiring tribute to those who gave much to preserve our Nation's freedom and way of life.*

## Category 1. **Customer Satisfaction**

### Sub-Category 1: **Survey**

Standard 1.1: Visually prominent areas, turf, sand, or mineral-based ground cover are maintained in a manner that is appropriate for the medium in place.



Measure 1.1: The percent of respondents to the annual Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) who agree or strongly agree that the overall appearance of the cemetery is excellent.

Priority Level: **Critical**  
Target: **99%**

**Note:** CSS results are stored [here](#):

Refer to the previous FYs CSS individual cemetery report for the performance data.

Standard 1.2: Each day's burial and niche sites are covered, initially groomed, marked, and made presentable for visitors before close of business each day.



Measure 1.2: The percent of respondents to the annual CSS who agree or strongly agree that the appearance of their loved one’s gravesite/columbaria is excellent.

Priority Level: **Critical**  
Target: **96%**

**Note:** CSS results are stored [here](#):

Refer to the previous FYs CSS individual cemetery report for the performance data.

Standard 1.3: Committal services are conducted with dignity and respect for the decedent, and compassion for their loved ones.

Measure 1.3: The percent of respondents to the annual CSS who were somewhat or very satisfied with the committal or memorial service.

Priority Level: **Critical**  
Target: **95%**

**Note:** CSS results are stored [here](#):

Refer to the previous FYs CSS individual cemetery report for the performance data.

Standard 1.4: Committal services are conducted in clean and orderly shelters that provide for the safety, privacy, and special needs of the family.



Measure 1.4: The percent of respondents to the annual CSS who agree or strongly agree that *the committal shelter used for the service was private, clean, and free of safety hazards.*

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **98%**

**Note:** CSS results are stored [here](#):

Refer to the previous FYs CSS individual cemetery report for the performance data.

Standard 1.5: Signage is convenient and helpful.



Measure 1.5: The percent of respondents to the annual CSS who agree or strongly agree that there are sufficient signs within the cemetery to assist visitors.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **90%**

**Note:** CSS results are stored [here](#):

Refer to the previous FYs CSS individual cemetery report for the performance data.

Standard 1.6: Headstones, markers, and niche covers are clean, free of debris and Objectionable Accumulations.



Measure 1.6: The percent of respondents to the annual CSS who agree or strongly agree that the upkeep of headstones, markers, and niche covers is excellent.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **98%**

**Note:** CSS results are stored [here](#):

Refer to the previous FYs CSS individual cemetery report for the performance data.

Standard 1.7: Customer Concerns are dealt with professionally, action plans are created, and completed within a timely manner.

Measure 1.7: Within 90 days of receiving the CSS results the cemetery develops an action plan targeting a measure(s) from the CSS that represents an opportunity for improvement or service recovery.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** CSS results are stored [here](#):

Refer to the previous FYs CSS individual cemetery report for the performance data.

## Sub-Category 2: **Complaints**

Standard 2.1: Cemeteries must have a complaint or complaint/compliment log.

Measure 2.1: The cemetery has a program for capturing complaints (mandatory) and compliments (preferred but optional). A complaint / compliment log is maintained by the cemetery staff and describes how the cemetery addressed and attempted to resolve each complaint.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.2: Committal services are conducted with dignity and respect for the decedent, and compassion for their loved ones.

Measure 2.2: The percent of complaints from visitors and family members about the committal service, when the cemetery is responsible, that are addressed and attempted to be resolved by the cemetery.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **100%**

Standard 2.3: Integrity of existing graves around the worksite will be preserved.



Measure 2.3: The percent of complaints from visitors and family members about the condition of a grave damaged during interment operations that are addressed and attempted to be resolved by the cemetery.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **100%**

Standard 2.4: Daily maintenance activities do not detract from the dignity and solemnity of the cemetery.



Measure 2.4: The percent of complaints received as a result of operations, noise, equipment, etc. intruding on the visitor's experience that are addressed and attempted to be resolved by the cemetery.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **100%**

## Category 2. **Equipment Maintenance**

### Sub-Category 1: **Records and Documentation**

Standard 1.1: Maintenance and service costs and program records are current and accurate.

Measure 1.1: Current and accurate maintenance and service costs and program records are maintained in the Current Inventory and Maintenance System.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Be prepared to show that the cemetery uses the *Manager Plus* system and the files are up to date. The District should concur with the up-to-date assessment.

Standard 1.2: All equipment maintenance activities and schedules are included in a current Cemetery Equipment Maintenance Program.

Measure 1.2: The cemetery has a current Cemetery Equipment Maintenance Program that contains all equipment maintenance activities and schedules.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Ensure all cemetery equipment is listed in the Manager Plus system and the records are up to date.

Standard 1.3: Equipment documentation is current.

Measure 1.3: Manufacturers' manuals, operating instructions, titles (if applicable) etc. are accessible electronically or via hard copy.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Cemetery Director - Using the EIL and Managers Plus ensure a digital and/or hard copy operators and/or maintenance manual is on hand for every piece of tracked cemetery equipment.

Standard 1.4: Equipment inspections and preparations are conducted according to manufacturers' recommendations at the start and end of the workday.

Measure 1.4: Pre-Operational Safety and Maintenance Inspection Checklist activities are completed and recorded daily.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Ensure daily pre-maintenance checks are completed and documented. Example of a pre-operational maintenance checklist can be found in the [NCA Safety SOP](#) B31 Motorized Vehicles and Equipment.

## Sub-Category 2: **Condition of Equipment and Tools**

Standard 2.1: Equipment is functional, in good condition, and visibly marked as national cemetery or Federal property.

Measure 2.1a: Cemetery Equipment and Vehicles present a clean and neat appearance based upon use.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **Yes**

Measure 2.1b: All cemetery owned and/or leased vehicles and motorized equipment will be marked with the cemetery name.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Ensure the cemetery name is on all vehicles (able to drive on public roads) and (motorized) equipment (includes items that move under their own power i.e. mowers, golf carts, etc.)

Measure 2.1c: Non-expendable Cemetery Equipment and Vehicles are marked with an Inventory Control Number (per VA policy – equipment valued at \$300 or more).

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Inventory Control Numbers (barcodes) are obtained through your EIL POC. Ensure all equipment is marked and the barcodes are in good condition.

Measure 2.1d: Non-functional equipment is identified and appropriate paperwork for turn in is submitted within 90 days of identification.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Note: Any non-functional / non-repairable equipment must have paperwork completed for turn in. Coordinate with your EIL POC for turn in instructions. Any non-functional equipment that poses a safety hazard must be handled per the Lockout Tagout (LOTO) SOP. For an example see [NCA Safety SOP B25](#).

Measure 2.1e: Personnel performing repairs on cemetery equipment are qualified and classified to do that work.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.2: Tools are available, properly maintained, and secure.

Measure 2.2: Tools are cleaned and stored in the proper location at the end of each workday and are stored in a secure location when not in use.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Document where and how equipment is stored. Equipment must be clean and properly stored in a secure location at the end of the day to meet this standard.

### Category 3. **Facilities Maintenance**

#### Sub-Category 1: **Facilities Management**

Standard 1.1: Buildings and structures are well-maintained and are acceptable for their functional use.



Measure 1.1a: The percent of cemetery buildings that are assessed as acceptable for their function based on the current Building / Structure Score Sheets of the Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA).

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **90%**

**Note:** The Building / Structure Score Sheets can be acquired from the District Chief Engineer. Any building or structure that is rated as “*Not Acceptable*” must have an action plan to resolve all D and F rated conditions. The cemetery and District should have copies of the Action Plan.

Measure 1.1b: The percent of cemetery structures that are assessed as acceptable for their function based on the current Building / Structure Score Sheets of the FCA.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **90%**

Standard 1.2: Access features are well-maintained and are acceptable for their functional use.



Measure 1.2a: The percent of access features (roads, parking lots, curb, walk, paths, entry features, perimeter walls/fences, bridges, overpasses, and sidewalks) that are assessed as acceptable for their function based on the current Site Score Sheet of the FCA.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **80%**

Measure 1.2b: Marked parking spaces (where provided) meet handicapped accessibility requirements in public and employee parking lots or areas.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 1.3: Approved water features are functional and maintained according to their intended purpose.



Measure 1.3: The percent of water features (natural or man-made ponds, lakes, fountains, pools, waterfalls) that are assessed as acceptable for their function based on the current Site Score Sheet of the FCA.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **80%**

Standard 1.4: Signage is convenient and helpful.

Measure 1.4a: The percent of signage (wayfinding) that are assessed as acceptable for their function based on the current Site Score Sheet of the FCA.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **80%**

Measure 1.4b: The cemetery's business hours, visitation hours, and telephone number are posted in a Visually Prominent Area (e.g., Entrance, Administration Building, Public Information Center).

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 1.5: Cemetery infrastructure is well-maintained and is acceptable for their functional use.

Measure 1.5a: Cemetery develops a corrective action plan within 90 days of receipt of FCA results that addresses all identified deficiencies. The CAP identifies the approach, timeline and responsible agency (District or Cemetery) for resolving each deficiency. The CAP has been submitted to and approved by District within the initial 90-day window and is maintained current by the cemetery.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 1.5b: Cemetery repair and maintenance needs for buildings, structures, access features, water features, and signage (wayfinding) are identified, documented and reported to the District Office annually and communication is documented.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 1.6: Restrooms are clean, functional, sanitary, and appropriately supplied (e.g., soap, paper towels, hand-dryer, and toilet paper) and are accessible.

Measure 1.6a: The percent of all cemetery restrooms that are inspected daily and determined to be clean and supplied in accordance with a Restroom

Checklist. Checklists are visibly posted in each restroom. (Excludes, temporary, and restricted use restrooms (i.e., construction site)).

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **100%**

Measure 1.6b: For cemeteries with **no on-site** assigned NCA employees, restrooms are cleaned and supplied as needed at least once a week and inspected at least once every two weeks.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **100%**

Measure 1.6c: Cemetery restrooms that do not meet Accessibility Standards are reported by the cemetery and included on a project list maintained at the District Office.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

## Sub-Category 2: **Kiosk / Gravesite Locator**

Standard 2.1: Kiosk / Gravesite locator is convenient, in good repair, and helpful.

Measure 2.1a: Cemetery Kiosk / Gravesite Locator is clean, operational, easily accessible to visitors, and prints legible maps.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Additional gravesite locator link can be accessed [here](#).

Measure 2.1b: Cemeteries that do not have a kiosk, will ensure a locator book is current, complete and printed in alphabetical order and accessible to visitors within 14 days of the most recent interment. (For those with **less than 10 burials per year**, this will be completed at a minimum of twice a year.)

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 2.1c: Stand-alone gravesite locator housing is in acceptable condition visually, fully functional (no broken doors, roof, or peeling paint etc.). The enclosure also provides room for an ample supply of current maps as well as posted signage to clearly identify and explain the gravesite location process.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

### Sub-Category 3: **Environmental Management**

Standard 3.1: Compliance with environmental requirements.

Measure 3.1: Current (within past 36 months) letter or certificate of Compliance with NCA Environmental Policies and Requirements.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 3.2: Spoils areas do not detract from cemetery appearance.

Measure 3.2: The cemetery's spoils are located in areas that minimize public visibility.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

### Sub-Category 4: **Waste Management**

Standard 4.1: Trash is collected, disposed of, and does not detract from cemetery appearance.

Measure 4.1a: The cemetery's central trash collection points are in areas that minimize public visibility.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 4.1b: Public-use trash receptacles are clearly marked, clean, neat, and in good repair.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 4.1c: The cemetery participates in Solid Waste Recycling Programs, where available.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

## Category 4. **Gravesite Assessment Review (GAR)**

### Sub-Category 1: **GAR**

Standard 1.1: Gravesites and the appropriate Headstone, Marker, or Niche Cover are maintained within the guidelines and limits required to allow for a visually pleasing experience.

Measure 1.1a: The percent of headstones, markers, and niche covers that do not show evidence of debris or Objectionable Accumulations.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **95%**

**Note:** The gravesite assessment criteria for cleanliness is found on pg. 5 of the Amended Instructions for Conducting the Gravesite Assessment Review dated Oct 1, 2014.

Measure 1.1b: The percent of gravesites that have grades which are level and blend with adjacent grade levels.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **95%**

**Note:** The gravesite assessment criteria for grade is found on pg. 6 (sunken graves) of the Amended Instructions for Conducting the Gravesite Assessment Review dated Oct 1, 2014.

Measure 1.1c: Turf around headstones is trimmed to the recommended height according to the Cemetery Grounds Management Plan.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **95%**

**Note:** The cemetery grounds maintenance plan specifies the height for turf to be trimmed and mowed. It should match. Ensure the gravesite is trimmed to the prescribed height in the ground's maintenance plan and is not scalped or bowled.

Measure 1.1d: The percent of gravesites where turf around flat markers is edged (NOT trimmed) according to the Grounds Management Plan and are free of trimming debris.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **95%**

**Note:** Edging is lateral trimming. It's not done to a height. It establishes a clean border around the marker. Confirm the flat marker has been properly edged.



Standard 1.2: Proper height, alignment, and plumb of each headstone and marker is maintained.



Measure 1.2a: The percent of headstones and/or markers that are at the proper height, alignment, and plumb (if applicable).

Priority Level: **Critical**  
Target: **90%**

Measure 1.2b: The percent of headstones, markers, and niche covers that are visually aligned horizontally, vertically, and diagonally.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **90%**

Measure 1.2c: The percent of headstones and markers that are at the proper height.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **90%**

**Note:** The gravesite assessment criteria for height is found on pg. 5-6 of the Amended Instructions for Conducting the Gravesite Assessment Review dated Oct 1, 2014.

Measure 1.2d: The percent of upright headstones that are at correct plumb (no less than 89 degrees).

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **90%**

**Note:** The gravesite assessment criteria for plumb is found on pg. 11 of the Amended Instructions for Conducting the Gravesite Assessment Review dated Oct 1, 2014. Per page 1; *“A 4-foot digital level should be used to get the plumb readings.”*

## Category 5. **Grounds Maintenance**

### Sub-Category 1: **Cemetery Grounds Management**

Standard 1.1: All maintenance activities are included in a current Cemetery Grounds Management Plan.

Measure 1.1: The cemetery has a written, current Cemetery Grounds Management Plan that includes all maintenance activities and schedules and are reviewed, updated, and approved by the District on an annual basis.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** If the cemetery does not have a copy of their updated grounds maintenance plan, the District Agronomist should be able to provide one.

## Sub-Category 2: **Turf / Mineral Base**

Standard 2.1: Visually prominent areas have sand, mineral, or well-established, healthy stand of turf.

Measure 2.1: Sand, mineral, or turf in visually prominent areas are generally weed free.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.2: All sand, mineral, or turf is free of debris, i.e., leaves, fallen branches, and trash.

Measure 2.2a: Sand, mineral, or turf in visually prominent areas is free of trash.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **Yes**

Measure 2.2b: Sand, mineral, or turf areas are cleared of leaves and other natural debris, as needed, or at least weekly.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.3: All sand, mineral, or turf areas are graded to ensure proper drainage and prevent standing or pooling water.

Measure 2.3: Sand, mineral, or turf in visually prominent areas do not show evidence of standing or pooling of water.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.4: Visually prominent areas have a well-established, healthy stand of turf.

Measure 2.4a: Visually Prominent Areas with established turf are Generally Free of Bare Areas.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **Yes**

Measure 2.4b: Visually Prominent Areas with established turf are maintained within one inch above the range of that which is professionally recommended for that type of turf and geographic region according to the Cemetery Grounds Management Plan.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.5: The turf used is compatible with the geographic region.

Measure 2.5: The cemetery is using turf that is compatible with the geographic region.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** The proper turf for a cemetery is listed in the Grounds Maintenance Plan. If there is a doubt a CD can refer to the District Agronomist.

Standard 2.6: Visually prominent areas are properly trimmed and edged.

Measure 2.6: Other features (any additional turf areas requiring edging or trimming such as sidewalks, curbs, monuments) are trimmed or edged according to the Cemetery Grounds Management Plan.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.7: Avoid damage and ensure continuation of a well-established, healthy stand of turf during grounds maintenance operations.

Measure 2.7: Turf damage due to grounds maintenance tasks is identified and corrective action initiated by close of business the same day.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.8: The grade of every gravesite blends in with adjacent grade levels.

Measure 2.8: Sunken graves have been identified and a plan of action developed to re-establish the ground level and cover within 30 calendar days of the date identified.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.9: Gravesite openers and re-openers avoid damage and ensure continuation of a well-established, healthy stand of turf, presenting a disciplined evolution, not a construction site.

Measure 2.9a: Interments (first and subsequent) during the growing season that show healthy turf re-established within 60 days of the interment.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 2.9b: Winter grave re-openers that show healthy turf re-established within 60 days of the start of the growing season.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.10: Visually prominent areas in which turf is not a part of the cemetery design are maintained in a manner that is appropriate for the medium in place. (Cemeteries Using Sand or Mineral-Based Ground Cover).



Measure 2.10: All Visually Prominent Areas appear raked and groomed and returning the gravesites to their original state within the same workday. (Cemeteries Using Sand or Mineral-Based Ground Cover).

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

### Sub-Category 3: **Trees and Shrubs**

Standard 3.1: Trees and shrubs (including donated trees) are compatible with the geographic region.

Measure 3.1: Trees and shrubs, including donations, are compatible with the geographic region **per agronomist document**.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Coordinate with your District agronomist ahead of the inspection. They will be the one to validate that any newly planted trees and shrubs are compatible to the geographic area. (You should be consulting with the agronomist prior to accepting any tree or shrub donations or conducting new plantings in your facility).

Standard 3.2: Trees and shrubs are healthy, and free of pests and disease, and/or are maintained in accordance with the Cemetery Grounds Management Plan.

Measure 3.2: Trees and shrubs are healthy and free of pests and disease, and/or are maintained in accordance with the Cemetery Grounds Management Plan.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** If you have a dead or dying tree(s) or shrub(s) you **must** have a plan to remedy or remove them.

### Sub-Category 4: **Planting Beds**

Standard 4.1: Cemetery Planting Beds are well maintained, attractive, and compatible with the geographic region.



Measure 4.1a: Planting beds are Generally Weed-Free.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **Yes**

Measure 4.1b: Plants in planting beds are healthy, free of pests and disease, and are maintained in accordance with the Cemetery Grounds Management Plan.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

### Sub-Category 5: **General Maintenance**

Standard 5.1: All areas where cemetery operations have been conducted are neat, clean, and free of debris and equipment at the end of the workday.

Measure 5.1a: Debris, equipment, tools, and supplies are removed at the conclusion of each task and at the end of the workday.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

Measure 5.1b: Roads, walkways, shelters, and burial sections are free of grounds maintenance debris by the end of the workday.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

Standard 5.2: The National Cemetery Administration’s floral policy is posted where the largest number of visitors will see the information.



Measure 5.2: Floral regulations are posted in visually prominent areas.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

Standard 5.3: Floral vases and its receptacles are well marked and in good condition.

Measure 5.3a: Floral vases are clean and in good repair.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

Measure 5.3b: Receptacles for floral vases are well marked, clean, neat, and in good repair.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

## Category 6. **Headstone, Marker and Niche Cover Operations**

Sub-Category 1: **Order**

Standard 1.1: The request for a headstone, marker, or niche cover is completed within prescribed time frames.

Measure 1.1: The percent of headstone, marker, and niche cover requests that are inscription approved (released from the cemetery in BOSS) within ten calendar days of interment.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **95%**

Standard 1.2: Inscription data are accurate and complete.

Measure 1.2: The percent of inscriptions ordered by the cemetery that are accurate and complete.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **99%**

## Sub-Category 2: **Delivery, Inspection, and Storage**

Standard 2.1: All headstones, markers, and niche covers are inspected and verified for inscription accuracy and quality.

Measure 2.1a: The percent of headstones, markers, and niche covers inspected to ensure the accuracy and quality of the inscription (centered, level, appropriate depth, consistency, etc.).

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **100%**

Measure 2.1b: The percent of headstones, markers and niche covers received damaged, incorrectly inscribed, or of poor quality that are reported and reordered within four calendar days of delivery or inscription on site.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **100%**

Standard 2.2: Headstones, markers, and niche covers are handled and stored to prevent damage prior to setting.

Measure 2.2: The percent of headstones, markers, and niche covers received annually that are replaced due to cemetery damage prior to setting.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Less than 1%**

Measure 2.3: The percent of replacement orders that are reviewed for accurate replacement reason, error, and expense codes in accordance to NCA policy.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **100%**

## Sub-Category 3. **Installation**

Standard 3.1: Headstones, markers and niche covers are set in a timely manner after receipt.

Measure 3.1a: The percent of headstones, markers, or niche covers set within ten calendar days of receipt.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **95%**

Measure 3.1b: The percent of graves marked with a permanent headstone, marker, or niche cover and set within 60 calendar days of the interment.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **95%**

Standard 3.2: Headstones, markers, and niche covers are properly installed.

Measure 3.2a: Upright headstones in current active burial sections are installed to be uniform in height (24"-26" above ground); horizontally, vertically, and diagonally aligned; and inscription visible. A deviation from the height requirement is acceptable to ensure a Pleasing Top Line is achieved to compensate for ground contours.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 3.2b: Flat markers in Active Burial sections are installed to be uniform in height (parallel with the ground and no more than 1" above ground level) and aligned horizontally, vertically, and diagonally.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 3.2c: Niche covers are installed to be horizontally and vertically aligned. The proper rosette and security screws are used.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

**Notes:** Horizontal and vertical alignment is not a function of completely tightening the rosettes and security screws. The niche must be adjusted to be properly aligned. Cemetery should have spare rosettes and security screws to immediately replace any that are broken.

Measure 3.2d: Headstones and Markers set in Existing Sections are installed to be uniform with only minor height deviations to achieve a Pleasing Top Line with like headstones and markers in that section, and/or are set to ensure the inscription is visible.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Be mindful of historic replacements. The inscription could be set below the ground line if the setting crew is not paying attention. This mostly applies to subsequent interments.

Measure 3.2e: Headstones and markers are located on the correct gravesite, consistent with the Gravesite Layout Plan (GLP).

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

#### Sub-Category 4. **Visible and Legible**

Standard 4.1: Headstones, markers, and niche covers that are no longer useable are disposed of in a manner that prevents reuse.

Measure 4.1a: Headstones, markers, and niche covers that are no longer useable are destroyed in a manner that obliterates the inscription and is dispositioned to prevent reuse; or placed within the existing gravesite for disposal to prevent reuse.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 4.1b: Bronze markers or niche covers are recycled within one year of removal from the grave or niche.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 4.2: Headstones, markers, and niche covers are not damaged by cemetery operations.

Measure 4.2: The percent of headstone, marker, and niche cover replacements within the last 12 months due to damage during cemetery operations.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Less than .1%**

Standard 4.3: Headstones, markers, or niche covers stolen, vandalized or damaged beyond reasonable repair by actions outside the cemetery's control (e.g., storms, automobile accidents) are repaired or replaced.

Measure 4.3: The percent of headstones, markers, or niche covers damaged beyond reasonable repair, stolen or defaced that are repaired or reordered within four calendar days of the date damage is identified.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **100%**

Standard 4.4: Headstone, marker and niche cover inscriptions are visible and legible, as appropriate for the age, and Historic Significance of the marker.

Measure 4.4: The percent of Historical Headstones, Markers and Niche Covers replaced during the past 12 months that are replaced with a headstone, marker, or niche cover of the same dimensions, material, inscription and features.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **100%**

**Note:** When replacing a historic headstone, marker or niche cover over 50 years old, consult with the NCA History Program. Save the History Program's direction on what type headstone, marker or niche cover to use.

## Category 7. Interment Operations

### Sub-Category 1: Layout of Burial Sections

Standard 1.1: Interment sections match GLP.

Measure 1.1a: Gravesite locations match the current Gravesite Layout Plan, Registry, and GBSAT.

Priority Level: **Critical**  
Target: **100%**

Measure 1.1b: In accordance with Field Programs and Cemetery Operations instructions; GLP are certified and updated semi-annually, and changes communicated to the District.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

## Sub-Category 2: **Site Preparation**

Standard 2.1: Each day's gravesites are properly excavated and present a neat appearance prior to burial.



Measure 2.1: Gravesites are excavated properly, at the proper depth, proper position (Left Half, Right Half, Center Line, etc.), spoils or sod appropriately removed or made presentable, and headstones for reopeners appropriately placed and/or protected.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.2: Integrity of existing graves around the worksite will be preserved.

Measure 2.2: Corrective action to repair damage caused by daily operations is initiated by close of business the same day.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 2.3: Outer burial receptacles awaiting installation are sufficient for the needs of the cemetery and placed in an orderly manner in an appropriate location.

Measure 2.3a: Outer burial receptacles are placed in a manner, so they do not obstruct occupied graves or hinder the flow of traffic through the cemetery.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 2.3b: Outer burial receptacles required for future installation are stored in an appropriate location away from public view.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

### Sub-Category 3: **Committal Service**

Standard 3.1: Veterans receive a committal service or memorial service.

Measure 3.1: The cemetery provides a committal service or has a program to memorialize Unaccompanied Veterans.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Ensure this is addressed in the Cemetery's SOP.

### Sub-Category 4: **Verification and Handling of Remains**

Standard 4.1: All caskets and urns are checked and verified to ensure accurate placement and are undamaged by cemetery personnel.

Measure 4.1a: Cemetery has a current (reviewed within past 24 months) Accounting for Remains SOP that has been certified by the Cemetery Director, incorporates standard tagging procedures for placing casket or urn into correct gravesite, and meets requirements of the Accounting for Remains Directive 3130. The cemetery follows the SOP when performing interment operations.

Priority Level: **Critical**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 4.1b: The percent of caskets or urns that are undamaged by cemetery staff from receipt through interment operations.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **100%**

### Sub-Category 5: **Appearance of Gravesite and Active Burial Section**

Standard 5.1: Each day's burial/niche sites are covered, initially groomed, marked, and made presentable for visitors before close of business each day.



Measure 5.1a: Daily interment or inurnment sites are marked with a correct and aligned temporary marker.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Temporary markers should be set with the same care and attention to detail as a permanent marker. They should be *“visually aligned laterally, transversely and diagonally with other headstones/markers/niche covers in the section”*.

Measure 5.1b: Daily burials are level with the surrounding terrain, tamped, raked smooth, and made ready for the application of seed or sod.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 5.1c: Floral arrangements are neatly placed on correct gravesites by close of business each burial day.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 5.2: The active burial section presents a disciplined evolution, not a construction site.

Measure 5.2: Subsections show evidence of progress toward completion; grass is being established, headstones and markers delivered are being set, excess dirt, debris, tools and equipment are removed.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

## Category 8. **Safety**

### Sub-Category 1: **Operations**

Standard 1.1: All areas and operations of each workplace, including office operations, shall be inspected at least annually.

Measure 1.1: Based upon Annual Workplace Evaluation (AWE) results, corrective action plans will be developed within 30 days upon receipt. Note: This is with the understanding that severe safety concerns are addressed upon identification during inspection.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 1.2: In accordance to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Walking Working Surfaces: All areas where cemetery operations have been conducted are neat, clean, and free of debris and equipment at the end of the workday.

Measure 1.2a: Roads, sidewalks, paths and parking lots open to the public or for cemetery operations during adverse conditions are safe and accessible (e.g., clear of ice and snow or storm debris).

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 1.2b: Safety hazards (holes, hazardous trees and branches, sprinkler heads, etc.) identified and corrective action initiated within the same workday.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 1.3: Open graves are identified and protected.

Measure 1.3: Open graves are protected by appropriate devices while unattended.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **Yes**

**Note:** Unattended gravesites need to be marked-off by tape or chain and: (a) lid on for preplaced crypts. or (b) opening covered by a lowering device, or (c) opening covered by boards or similar product (must be able to hold at least 200 pounds). Additionally, nothing should be wrapped around a headstone (such as tape or chains) as part of the marking-off of an open gravesite.

Standard 1.4: Cemetery facilities and infrastructures are maintained to avoid safety hazards for visitors and staff.

Measure 1.4: The number of accidents or injuries reported due to unsafe conditions in the cemetery as a result of poor maintenance of facilities and infrastructures.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **0**

Standard 1.5: Grounds are maintained in a manner that avoids safety hazards for visitors and staff.

Measure 1.5: The number of accidents or reported injury to visitors or cemetery staff due to preventable safety hazards as reported on VA Form 2162.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **0**

Standard 1.6: Each agency will conduct an Accident Investigation following any employee, volunteer, contractor or visitor injury or property damaged using VA Form 2162 (Report of Accident) or SF Form 91 (Motor Vehicle Accident Report).

Measure 1.6: Accidents or reportable injuries to visitors or cemetery staff due to safety hazards are documented on VA Form 2162.

Priority Level: **Medium**

Target: **100%**

## Sub-Category 2: **Personnel**

Standard 2.1: Necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and safety measures will be adhered to at all times. (Within NCA, PPE is addressed in specific OSHA standards for General Industry and Construction. OSHA requires that many categories of PPE meet or be equivalent to standards developed by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI)).

Measure 2.1a: Personnel wear appropriate uniform in accordance with NCA's Directive 3012 (NCA Uniforms and Personal Protective Equipment) and PPE for assigned tasks per OSHA Standards and NCA PPE Matrix.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **Yes**

Measure 2.1b: The number of accidents that occur as a result of improper use or lack of using PPE or safety measures during cemetery operations.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **Yes**

**Note:**

[NCA Safety SOP B32 Personnel Protective Equipment:](#)

[NCA PPE Matrix:](#)

Standard 2.2: Necessary PPE and safety measures will be adhered to at all times.

Measure 2.2: The number of accidents that occur as a result of improper use or lack of using PPE or safety measures during cemetery operations.

Priority Level: **High**

Target: **0**

## Sub-Category 3: **Administrative Application**

Standard 3.1: Each agency shall post appropriate OSHA and VA / NCA Documentation.

Measure 3.1a: The facility has VA / NCA Form 2180 posted in a location where employees may obtain information about the agency's occupational safety and health program, including the full text of agency occupational safety and health standards.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 3.1b: Post the OSHA Form 300A from February 1 to April 30 of the year following the year covered by the form.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 3.1c: Post Procedures assuring no employee is subject to restraint, interference, coercion, discrimination, or reprisal for filing a report, participating in OSHA program, or exercising their rights afforded under Section 19 of the Act, EO 12196 and 29 CFR 1960.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 3.1d: Post Collateral Duty Safety Officer (CDSO) appointment memorandum signed by the facility director. This item should be current to identify appropriate Safety Officer.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 3.2: Develop and implement Emergency Action Plan (EAP). EAP covers the designated actions that employers and employees must take to ensure safety from fire and other emergencies.

Measure 3.2a: EAP must be updated annually.

Priority Level: **High**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 3.2b: EAP must be tested at least twice annually.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 3.2c: All employees must review EAP to ensure each employee is trained upon initial assignment those parts of the EAP and Fire Prevention Plan (FPP) that the employee must know to protect him or herself in the event of an emergency.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Measure 3.2d: The written plans must be available to the employees and kept at the workplace.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **Yes**

Standard 3.3: The facility conducts Monthly Safety Training.

Measure 3.3: The cemetery conducts Safety Training at least monthly.

Priority Level: **Medium**  
Target: **10 to 12 Sessions Annually**

## GLOSSARY

**Acceptable for Their Function:** Based on the Facilities Condition Assessment report, which can be obtained from the NCA District Chief Engineer. The percentage of cemetery buildings that are assessed as acceptable is derived by dividing the total acceptable buildings by the total buildings. The percentage of cemetery structures that are assessed as acceptable is derived by dividing the total acceptable structures by the total structures. The percentage of access features that are assessed as acceptable is derived by dividing the access features with an overall score of “C’s” or higher by the total access features. The percentage of water features that are assessed as acceptable is derived by dividing the water features with an overall score of “C’s” or higher by the total water features. The percentage of signage (wayfinding) that are assessed as acceptable is derived by dividing the signage (wayfinding) with an overall score of “C’s” or higher by the total signage (wayfinding)..

**Access Features:** roads, parking lots, curb, walk, paths, entry features, perimeter walls/fences, bridges, overpasses, and sidewalks.

**Bare Area:** An area within established turf where grass seed has not germinated.

**BOSS:** Burial Operations Support System

**Building:** A man-made structure that is heated or cooled and/or enclosed within a roof and within exterior walls providing shelter and support of individuals and/or real property. A building is usually a completely enclosed, weather-tight structure.

**Cemetery Equipment Maintenance Program:** A written schedule which identifies the manufacturers recommended maintenance activities and services for each vehicle and piece of equipment.

**Cemetery Grounds Management Plan:** A maintenance plan developed by each national cemetery, which identifies required maintenance tasks and schedules for all ground’s activities.

**Current Inventory and Maintenance System:** Inventory for cemetery equipment is currently maintained on the Automated Engineering Management System/Medical Equipment Reporting System (AEMS/MERS), and a cemetery system of electronic or manual records.

**Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS):** An annual survey conducted by NCA to determine the level of family and funeral director satisfaction with staff, service and appearance of national cemeteries.

**Disciplined Evolution:** The visual impression of an active burial section where there is evidence of several activities in progress. These include, completed burials, turf established, headstones/markers set on gravesites, new burials, and new gravesites that are raked and prepared for turf establishment and headstone/marker placement.

**Equipment:** Non-street legal machinery, such as: tractors, mowers, golf carts and other motorized items.

**Facilities Condition Assessment:** A tool identifying the overall infrastructure condition for buildings, structures and overall site at all national cemeteries. The tool consists of a one-page assessment for each building and structure, and a one-page assessment for the overall site.

**Generally Free of Bare Areas:** The presence of bare ground is very widely scattered and visually insignificant when the total expanse of the cemetery turfgrass is observed. They in no way distract from the visual attractiveness of the landscape.

**Generally Weed Free:** Population of weeds is very widely scattered and visually insignificant when the total expanse of the cemetery turfgrass is observed. They in no way distract from the visual attractiveness of the landscape.

**Gravesite Layout Plan:** A plan depicting burial sections with individual gravesites showing all pertinent spatial information necessary to accurately establish the layout of the burial sections, and to precisely locate specific gravesites. The plan identifies benchmarks and survey reference points for registering the grid of gravesite layout control markers. The plan shows the varying sizes and shapes of the burial sections and the visual separation from other features by vegetation, roads, walks, or changes in slope.

**Historical Headstones, Markers, and Niche Covers:** Headstones, markers, and niche covers installed 50 or more years ago.

**Historic Significance:** A combination of age, material, inscriptions, uniqueness of design, artist, etc., which contributes to the historical integrity of a monument, headstone, or marker within a cemetery.

**Inventory Control Number:** An NXRN number and/or an Automated Management System/Medical Equipment Reporting System (AEMS/MERS) number issued by the servicing station for inventory control.

**Low Visual Impact Areas:** Non-use areas; areas viewed at considerable distance; soil spoils areas.

**Medium Visual Impact Areas:** Non-burial areas adjacent to secondary roads; Areas adjacent to the maintenance building and yard; Areas adjoining the memorial walkways/paths.

**Non-Expendable Cemetery Equipment:** Equipment that has an acquisition cost of \$300 or more; and a life expectancy of two years or more or is of a sensitive nature which requires accountability regardless of cost, life expectancy, or maintenance requirements.

**Objectionable Accumulations:** The presence of environmental deposits, mold, mildew, moss, algae, lichen, grass clippings, grass marks, tire marks and scuffs, and accumulations of dried bird droppings, etc. on headstones, markers, and niche covers.

**Planting Bed:** A defined area of non-turf type planting material. The perimeter is outlined, and the bed is filled with ground cover and/or other non-turf plant material.

**Solid Waste Recycling Program:** A program developed at the cemetery in compliance with local, state and federal regulations to collect and separate solid waste to maximize pollution prevention techniques, i.e., paper, glass bottles, jars, aluminum and steel cans, tires, batteries, cardboard, plumbing fixtures, fence material, lumber, insulation, siding, paneling, flooring, carpet and pads, plastic sheeting and plastic laminate, piping and wiring.

**Spoils Area:** A holding area for compost and soil removed from gravesites.

**Structure:** A structure is a man-made asset that does not fall under the building definition. Common structures are committal service shelters, three-sided storage enclosures, pump house, underground pump vault, etc. Structures are usually open to the weather.

**Sunken Grave:** Any grave where the grade of the gravesite is not level and does not blend with the grade level of adjacent gravesites. The settlement presents an unsatisfactory appearance, and/or a maintenance or safety situation.

**Tools:** Non-drivable motorized equipment such as tampers, drills, etc.) and non-powered items, such as rakes, shovels, and etc.

**Unaccompanied Veteran:** A Veteran who's next of kin is not known or whose burial arrangements have been made by the public administrator, a VA Medical Center, or an Anatomy Board.

**Vehicles:** Automobiles that can be driven on the highway.

**Visually Prominent Area:** This refers to areas within a national cemetery that attract notice due to what is in the area (for example, a cemetery's entrance way, assembly area, interment areas, public information building, committal service shelter(s), visitor entrance to the administration building, lodges and other buildings in prominent locations, and/or memorial path) or topography which makes the area visually prominent. While all parts of a national cemetery are national shrine areas, those that are visually prominent often provide families and visitors with their first impression of the cemetery. These areas include, but are not limited to: Interment areas; Public information building; Committal service shelters; Visitor entrance to the administration building; Columbaria; Entrance gate; Areas adjacent to the main entrance road; Primary roads and routes to the committal service shelters; Turf, trees and planting areas adjacent to flagpole/assembly area; Memorial walkways/paths / Monuments; Lodges and other buildings in prominent locations.

**Water Features:** Landscape design using water decoratively or functionally, i.e., natural or man-made ponds, lakes, fountains, pools, waterfalls.