



What to Know for Your Wreath Laying Ceremony (as of June 2024)

Arlington National Cemetery (ANC), our nation's most hallowed ground, is the final resting place of more than 400,000 veterans and their family members. ANC hosts approximately 3,500 ceremonies each year. These range from official visits by U.S. and foreign dignitaries to public wreath laying ceremonies at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We are grateful to all those who visit ANC and choose to honor those who have served and sacrificed on behalf of our nation.

All ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery must solely honor the memory of those interred, inurned or memorialized in the cemetery; individuals who died while serving in the U.S. military during a specific conflict; or those who died while serving in a particular military unit.

To learn more about the cemetery and its history, explore our Education Program: <https://education.arlingtoncemetery.mil/>. For all who participate in ceremonies, the "Understanding Arlington" module offers an overview of the cemetery and its traditions, as well as tips for visitors: <https://education.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Themes/Understanding-Arlington>. For more information on the history and significance of the Tomb, please see <https://education.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Themes/Tomb-of-the-Unknown-Soldier>.

Before the Ceremony

- Please ensure you have reviewed all pre-ceremony guidance, confirm timelines provided to you via email from the ANC Office of the Chief of Protocol. Ensure the intake form is filled to completion and submitted to the Office of the Chief of Protocol at least one week in advance of your ceremony.
- If any detail of your event changes such as arrival time, group size or the addition of distinguished visitors or external media outlets, please contact the ANC Office of the Chief of Protocol immediately. **All changes to your ceremony will be subject to review and approval by Arlington National Cemetery.**
- Media presence is **NOT** approved until your organization has received prior authorization from the ANC Public Affairs Office.
- All participants and spectators must familiarize themselves with the visitor rules for Arlington National Cemetery: www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Visit/Visitor-Tips. For more detailed information about visitor rules, scroll to the bottom of the webpage and read the Code of Federal Regulations: 32 CFR § 553.33



Ordering a Wreath

- The individual or organization laying the wreath is responsible for supplying the wreath and ensuring the wreath is present on the day of the ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Arlington National Cemetery cannot recommend specific florists.
- Unless you have pre-coordinated a hand delivery of the wreath to ANC staff, the wreath must be delivered by the florist of your choice **no earlier than 24 hours before** the scheduled wreath laying ceremony, and **no later than three hours before** the ceremony. You are responsible for ensuring that your local florist can access Arlington National Cemetery to deliver the wreath. Wreaths can be delivered to the “Office of the Sergeant of the Guard”.
- Decorations, banners, or ribbons adhered to wreaths may include names of organizations or individuals dedicating the wreath. However, commercial logos may not be displayed on the wreath. Standard lettering spelling the name of the company may be displayed. **Wreaths may not give the appearance of endorsing a particular organization, cause, movement, non-profit organization, commercial entity, or political campaign.** Wreaths are considered gifts to The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and will not be returned.
- **Recommended dimensions for wreaths are 24-36 inches wide.** The wreath may not be wider than 36 inches at its widest point. The wreath height from the ground, including the stand, may not exceed 54 inches. The wreath must be circular in nature with a hollow center (not including any banners/ribbons). Handmade wreaths are allowed; however, they must present a professional and neat appearance.

Ceremonial Protocol

- Participants in Wreath Ceremonies must follow all instructions provided by Tomb Guards and/or cemetery officials.
- The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a silent and sacred memorial. All observers and participants must remain silent during the ceremony. **It is strictly forbidden to give remarks, speeches or offer audible prayers. Please encourage your entire party to silence their phones.**
- Ceremonies must not include any partisan political activities. Partisan political activities include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Ceremonies that include commentary in support of, or in opposition to, or attempts to influence any current policy of the armed forces, the government of the United States of America or any U.S. state.

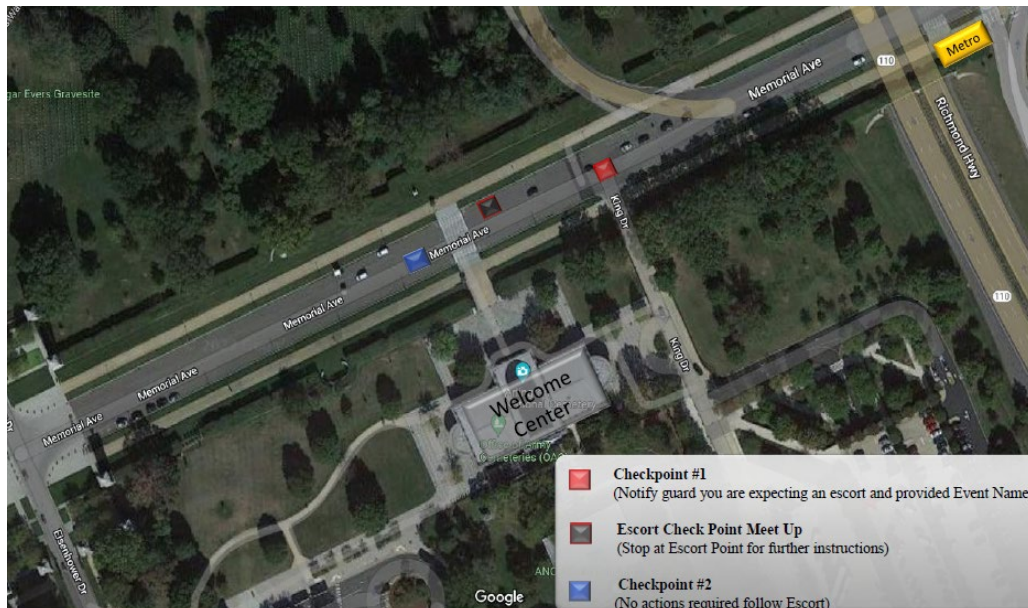


- b. Ceremonies that endorse a political party's cause or has a primary purpose to gain publicity or engender support for any cause.
 - c. Ceremonies that are closely related by time, intent or location to partisan activities conducted outside the cemetery.
- Disorderly conduct is strictly prohibited and may be defined as, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:
 - a. Engaging, promoting, encouraging, aiding, or abetting threatening, violent or tumultuous behavior.
 - b. Yelling, uttering loud and boisterous language, or making other unreasonably loud noise.
 - c. Interrupting or disturbing a memorial service or ceremony.
 - d. Voicing abusive, profane, indecent, or provocative language or gestures meant to incite an immediate breach of peace.
 - e. Obstructing movement on the streets, sidewalks, or pathways of the cemetery grounds.
 - f. Disobeying a request by a cemetery official to disperse or to leave the cemetery grounds.
 - g. Creating a hazardous environment that impacts the safety and well-being of visitors or staff members.
- For a list of items prohibited to bring into the cemetery, please visit www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Visit/Security.
- For proper ceremony dress code, please visit <https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Visit/Events-and-Ceremonies/Dress-Code-for-Public-Wreath-Ceremonies>. Appropriate military ceremonial uniform is authorized.
- **All ceremonies are subject to cancellation or rescheduling** due to inclement weather and other unforeseen circumstances. Occasionally, ceremonies may be displaced due to command orders from the Military District of Washington.
- Wreath Ceremonies held during normal cemetery hours shall be open to all members of the public to observe, however, you can be provided a stanchioned area solely for your party members and guests.



Arrival to the Cemetery

- Ensure that all drivers are provided the correct address: 1 Memorial Avenue, Ft Myer, Arlington, Virginia, 22211. Please provide vehicle information such as make, model and license plate numbers to the Office of the Chief of Protocol on the event intake form.
- Upon arrival to Arlington National Cemetery, be prepared to stop at the first checkpoint. At the checkpoint you will be greeted by a Traffic Control Agent (TCA). Provide the TCA your event name and that you will be escorted to the event (see diagram below). The escort will then take you to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Please do not arrive earlier than your timeline recommends.



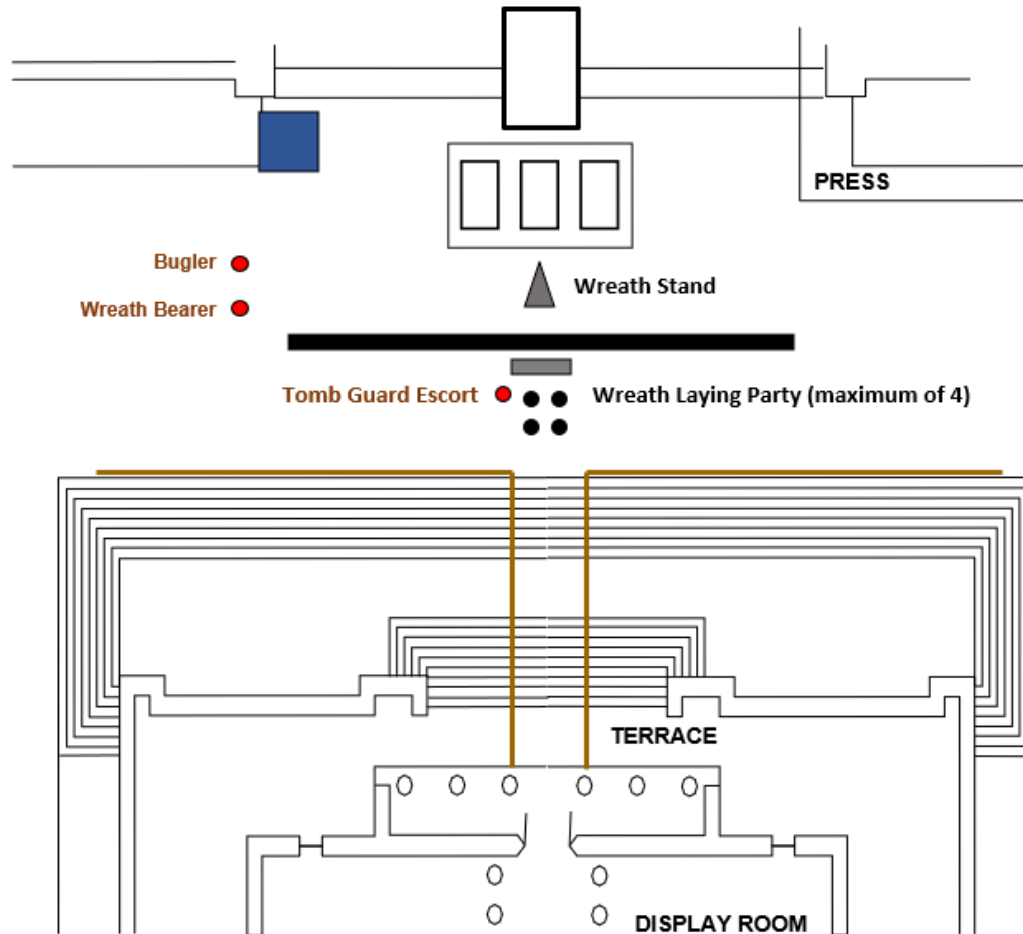
- Upon departure from Memorial Avenue to the Tomb, you will be escorted to the West Steps of Memorial Amphitheater (see photo on following page) where an ANC staff member will greet your party. Your principal and official travel delegation will then be escorted to the Display Room. Others members of the delegation will be escorted straight to the Tomb East steps.



The Ceremony Sequence

- A ceremonial wreath briefing will take place inside the Memorial Amphitheater Display Room. At this time, the participants will be able to ask questions about the wreath laying.
- This [video](#) and the diagram on the following page act as a guide for the wreath laying ceremony sequence.

Note: Between one and four members of the delegation may participate in the wreath laying ceremony. There will be no exceptions made to this policy as there is a strict limit for participants in wreath ceremonies. Their names should be communicated to the Office of the Chief of Protocol before the day of the event and should have been provided via the intake form. Other individuals may observe the ceremony from the stanchioned area leading to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier



- The ceremonial party will consist of a ceremony host, a wreath bearer, and a bugler. The sequence is as follows:
 1. The individual or individuals chosen to participate in the wreath laying will be escorted out of the Display Room and meet the host at the top of the steps in front of Tomb of the Unknown Soldier immediately following the guard change at the top of the hour (see photo below).
 2. If there is more than one participant, they will be arranged in a square formation facing the Tomb. **Only the two participants closest to the Tomb will physically lay the wreath.**
 3. The ceremony host will escort the participants by descending the steps, without pause, and will halt in a designated position in front of the Tomb.



4. The wreath bearer will advance from the left to present the wreath with the front two participants. The two participants in the front will move forward to lay the wreath, while the two participants in the rear will remain in place. While the wreath is being placed, the ceremony host will give the command “present arms.”
5. At this time, military personnel in uniform will render a hand salute. Civilians should place their right hand over their heart.
6. Together, the two participants and wreath bearer will place the wreath at the Tomb. After the wreath is in position, the participants will return to their position beside the ceremony host. The bugler will then sound “Taps.”
7. Upon the ceremony host’s command of “order arms,” the host and participants will make a 180-degree turn and guide the ceremony participants back up the steps. This concludes the ceremony.

Post Ceremony

- At the conclusion of the ceremony, please follow instructions given from the Office of the Chief of Protocol. Some party members may be asked return to the display room for additional event features.
- Your party will then be escorted back to the West Steps of Memorial Amphitheater for a photo opportunity.
- Given you have not pre-coordinated a second stop to a gravesite, ANC staff will escort your motorcade out of the cemetery at this time.