

Requesting Military Service Records and Replacement Medals

Military personnel records can be used for proving military service, or as a valuable tool in genealogical research. Most veterans and their next-of-kin can obtain free copies of their DD 214 (Report of Separation) and other military and medical records from the National Personnel Records Center (NRPC). The Standard Form SF-180 is recommended for requesting all replacement records and medals. Your request must contain certain basic information in order to locate your records. This information includes the veteran's complete name used while in service, service number, social security number, branch of service, dates of service, and date and place of birth (especially if the service number is not known). The normal response time for DD 214s is ten (10) working days or less. However, requests that involve reconstruction efforts due to the 1973 fire or older records which require extensive search efforts may take much longer. If there is an emergency or deadline associated with your request, please explain this on the SF-180.

Requests for the issuance or replacement of military service medals, decorations, and awards should be directed to the specific branch of the military in which the veteran served. Provide as much information as possible and send the SF-180 to the appropriate military branch. Generally, there is no charge for medal or award replacements. The length of time to receive a response or your medals and awards varies depending upon the branch of service sending the medals.

Limited information from Official Military Personnel Files is releasable to the general public without the consent of the veteran or the next-of-kin. You are considered a member of the general public if you are asking about a veteran who is no relation to you, or a veteran who is a relative but you are not the next-of-kin. Next-of-kin is defined as the un-remarried widow or widower, son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister of the deceased veteran.

There are many benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can also get information on the web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office website at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 West Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230, the phone number is 582-3211 ex. 2662 or email joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.