

A photograph of a woman in a military camouflage uniform hugging a young boy in a plaid shirt. The woman is smiling and has her eyes closed, while the boy is also smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is blurred.

Agency Climate Implementation Plan

Maryland Department of Veterans and Military Families

November 1, 2024



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF
VETERANS & MILITARY FAMILIES



Agency Climate Implementation Plan

Department of Veterans and Military Families Climate Implementation Plan
required by Executive Order, "Leadership by State Government:
Implementing Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan"

Part 1: Agency Actions Under the Climate Pollution Reduction Plan

- Increase department awareness by identifying the Climate Vulnerability Score of state veterans cemeteries and buildings under DVMF's purview.
- Pursue Green Purchasing Specialization training for DVMF's Certified Maryland Procurement Officers (CMPO).
- Update building operations policies that maximize energy efficiency and decarbonization strategies.
- Include a request for decarbonization in future project justification applications.
- Continue to provide timely and complete data on energy spending and usage to DGS.
- Pursue federal funding opportunities and tax credits to maximize available funding.

Part 2: Recommending Actions to Address Climate Change

Cemetery/Memorials Program

- DVMF has already begun, and will continue to transition away from gas-powered, hand-held lawn tools to more efficient battery-powered tools at state veterans cemeteries and memorials.
- New vehicle and equipment purchases will support state climate standards.
- Pursue ways to reduce our carbon footprint by considering the installation of solar panels at cemetery administration buildings.
- Green Burial Option
 - This year, Maryland enacted the Green Death Care Options Act (Ch.599, 2024), which establishes a regulatory system to allow for more environmentally-friendly burial options.
 - The VA's National Cemetery Administration (NCA) will soon begin piloting green burial¹ programs in several states, which will inform and define the NCA's future operational procedures and recommendations.
 - Based on the results and recommendations of these pilot programs, DVMF may add green burial as a new eco-friendly option for veterans.

¹ Green burial is an environmentally- sensitive burial alternative in which bodies are buried in biodegradable containers, such as a shroud or wicker casket without use of embalming chemicals.

Charlotte Hall & Future Veterans Home

- DVMF will require the contractor who manages operations at Charlotte Hall Veterans Home (CHVH) to track and report their green purchasing.
- The future Sykesville Veterans Home and CHVH renovations will have a minimum standard of LEED Silver with the goal of LEED Gold. These projects are procured by DGS with 65% of the costs covered by federal funding.

Part 3: Considering Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions and Impacts on Disproportionately Affected Communities

- DVMF has now identified the Climate Vulnerability Score for each of the cemeteries and buildings under our purview. We will use these scores to plan, prioritize projects, and meet the requirements of our CIP.

Part 4: Resources for Implementation

Implementing Maryland's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan

- The concrete steps we can take within a year are continuing to replace gas-powered grounds maintenance equipment (leaf blowers, trimmers) utilized by our Cemetery and Memorials staff, when the equipment is ready for disposal, with battery-powered equipment. Solar panels are probably a few years down the road; we can start to assess costs in year one. We can also work with our Charlotte Hall contractor on reporting in year one.

Implementing this Climate Implementation Plan

- The Department currently has no budget allocated specifically for climate change reduction except for our biggest, the energy standards for the new Veterans Home in Sykesville, which are covered 35% by the State and 65% by the VA once the project is awarded. Some other changes can be accomplished within existing budgets, such as requiring the Charlotte Hall contractor to report on green purchasing or replacing gas-powered hand tools with battery-powered hand tools when the old tools die. There will be significant but unknown costs to solar panels for Cemetery buildings, replacing vehicles (when they die) with hybrid/EV's, or performing green burials. We anticipate the likelihood of the Department requesting additional funding at such time as we are preparing to make these

larger changes. DVMF will work with the Federal Investment Team to seek out and apply for additional federal funding.

Part 5: Outcomes from Implementation

- These changes and adjustments to our planning, budget considerations, and possible funding structures will contribute to meeting the State's greenhouse gas emissions goals. The Department's CIP should lower energy costs and increase overall health benefits.