

The American Legion Membership Card

Each year membership cards are pre-printed at National Headquarters – with the names and addresses of your previous year’s members and with the number and location of your Post. The card is made up of three parts.

At the extreme right is the “Official Membership Card,” to be given to the member after dues have been paid. The left portion ends up at National, and the Department gets the middle portion. The left/middle portions are identified as “The American Legion Record Department Card” and should **NOT** be separated. General instructions are on the reverse of the Record Card.

The Record Card has several boxes to be used in making out cards for new members, correcting continuous years of members, correcting a change/misspelled name, or correcting the war era. Procedures on making these changes are found later in this manual.

The membership card should **NOT** be used to correct an address. A Member Data Form should be completed for this purpose.

Membership ID Number

Every member that gets a pre-printed card is assigned a **9-digit identification number**, which will stay with the person as long as dues are paid continuously without a disruption in membership.

Even if a person transfers from one Post to another, and proper transfer procedures are followed, this ID number remains with the member. For this reason, it is most important to complete an official transfer using the Member Data Form. This will prevent a duplicate record on the data system.

The Official Membership ID number is printed in four places on the pre-printed membership cards. It is printed twice on the left section, and once each on the other two sections.

This ID number is the most important feature in identifying the member from all other Legion members, and should be used when you call or write to Department or National concerning a member.

Name of Post

For technical reasons, it is not feasible for National Headquarters to print on the Member’s Card (right portion) the name of your Post. However, a line is provided so the name may be stamped, typed, or printed on the card by the Post Adjutant. The line below the member’s name will have no printing on it when received from National, and this is the space where the Post name may be added.

Scan Line

When the left section (National’s portion) of the membership card is processed through the scanner equipment, the primary line scanned is noted on the sample card...these are the series of numbers and characters “A” – “F.” **Never** change or mark over this area; it can cause scanning errors in processing.

Pre-printed Card Information Explained

A/B/C/D/E/F – The characters that appear here make up the SCAN line. Do not change any of the information on this line. Do not mark in this area for any reason.

A – This is the permanent 9-digit member ID Number– it will stay the same as long as the member continues to pay dues annually or for life.

B – This number represents the membership year.

C – These positions identify the department, post, and sometimes the country.

D – These numbers serve as a counter – for example, if your Post has 195 pre-printed cards for members from last year, and you get an extra 25 blank cards (use for new members), the first card will have a 6-digit sequence number of 000001 and the last card will have 000220.

E – This variable number has importance only to National’s scanning equipment.

F – All Legion cards have an “L,” and the SAL cards carry an “S.”

G – Only the first war era a member served is indicated on left and middle sections of the card.

H – Anytime a war era is to be updated or changed, this box must be marked on both sections.

I – Anytime the Continuous Years or the Member’s Name is to be changed, this box must be marked. The correct information is to be entered in the same space provided for the name/continuous years...correct both sections.

J – City/State location of the Legion Post.

Post Membership Register (See duplicate copy on the next page)

When you receive the cards, you also receive a “Membership Register.” The Register is double-spaced between each member’s record and is composed of one or more printed sheets. The Register will be listed in **exact alphabetical order** of all your previous year’s members whose cards were received at National before April 1. The register may also include the names of members who paid dues in previous years, but did not pay for the most-recent year at the time of printing the Register for the next year. Their “expired” records are still on National’s data system. You can easily identify these records by reviewing the column headed “Last Paid Year” on the left side of the Register. **Special attention is called to the last five columns. Data in one or more of these columns is explained in the following.**

CER FLAG – A number code here will show if a member has had a 50, 60, 70, 75, or 80-year continuous membership certificate printed. Only the most recent certificate code will be reflected.

EX FLAG – A “C” code means the member will not receive a dues renewal notice. If a “D” code appears, the member will not receive a renewal or a magazine from National.

ERA – This code identifies the war era on file at National for the member, showing the first war era the member may have served. Many members served in more than war, but only the first one is recorded in National’s data system. War era corrections should be reported on the member’s membership card and forwarded to the Department Headquarters, or on a Member Data Form.

TY – The “Type” code identifies one of three types of life membership:

“**H**” – this indicates the member has received an **Honorary Life Membership** from the Post; the Post becomes responsible for the payment of the member’s annual dues.

“**L**” – this indicates a “**purchased**” **life membership** in Kansas or Nebraska; these two departments do not participate in National’s Paid-Up-For-Life Program.

“**P**” – this indicates the member is a **Paid-Up-For-Life (PUFL) Member**.

UN – A “U” will identify those individuals, reported by the U.S. Postal Service, as having an address that is not correct...according to them the mail is **undeliverable**. Posts can assist in verifying if the address is good or bad. Any member with a “U” code on their record will not receive any mail from National, such as *The American Legion Magazine*, renewal notice, department publications, etc.

SEQUENCE NO. – This 6-digit number, which is also printed on the card can help the Post find the card or the member’s name on the roster. This is an alternative to using the “alphabetical” look-up.

Note: The name field allows for the printing of a SUFFIX (such as Jr., Sr., etc).

Extra (Blank) Cards

Every post receives a pre-determined percentage of blank cards in addition to the pre-printed ones. If you run out, request additional ones from the Department Headquarters. **The blank cards are to be used for new members and providing duplicate or replacement cards** – refer to the information provide later in this manual.

Handling a Renewal Membership

After a member pays their dues, locate their 3-part membership card (they're in alpha order), and:

- 1) **Fill in the date paid on the center section.**
- 2) **Put your initials on the center section (next to “date paid” line).**
- 3) **Sign the member’s official card on the line reserved for the authorized officer.**
- 4) **Place an “X” in the “Renewal Box” in the upper right of the center section.**
- 5) **Separate the member’s card from the left/center sections (keep together). These go to the Department. Give or mail the card to the member promptly.**
- 6) **Find the member’s name on the membership register, which is in alphabetical order, and mark the date paid in the column set aside for this purpose – extreme left column.**

Except for the important job of transmitting the dues and the left/center sections of the card to the Department Headquarters, which is explained later, this completes your record keeping for a renewal member. Changing addresses, etc., is also described later.

Handling New Members

Always ask a prospective member if he/she currently belongs or has recently been a member.

The instructions here on new members will also apply to:

- ...**Transfers, for whom there is no pre-printed membership card, or**
- ...**Any renewal, if for any reason, you did not receive a pre-printed card.**

When a new member pays dues for the current year, take the first **blank** card from those supplied from your Department. The serial number printed on the card will be the 6-digit sequence number, explained earlier in this manual. For the 1st year of membership, the 6-digit sequence number will be the member’s ID number.

Type or print on the left/center card sections the following information:

Membership ID No. – same as the 6-digit sequential no; *

First name, middle initial, last name of new member;

Mailing address;

City, state, zip code;

Years of continuous membership (One year for a new member);

War Era (first war era served);

***A person that transfers should be able to provide the permanent 9-digit ID number.**

Put an “X” in the proper box in the upper center of the card to show renewal, new, or a transfer.

Put the date and your initials on the line on the upper-center portion to validate the card. If membership records are handled by an officer other than the Post Adjutant, the initials of the designated officer, such as the 1st Vice Commander or Finance Officer, are acceptable.

Type or print the member's name on the first line of the Official Membership Card (right side), just above the words "The above member has paid dues for (year) in the Post indicated above." If the number of the Post has not been pre-printed, enter the Post number. If possible, type all information. On the second line of the Official Membership Card (right section), you may wish to type the Post name.

On the next line, if not already pre-printed, enter the city and state location of the Post. Sign the Official Membership Card.

Enter the number of years of continuous membership at the top of the Official Membership Card. A new member paying dues for the first time should be credited with one year of membership. Also, be sure to add the number of years in the appropriate boxes on the left/center sections. **Be sure to fill out all sections of the three-part card. Please do not change, strike over or mark out any of the numbers printed on the cards.** Follow this rule when making cards for new and renewal members.

On the Register, find the same number printed on the right side corresponding to the serial number on the card you have just made out for the new member. Add, opposite this number, in the columns provided for this purpose, the member's name, address, city, state, zip, continuous years and war era.

If, for some reason, you do not receive a pre-printed card for one or more members, make out a **blank** card for the member who belonged last year, record the name, address, and member ID number in exactly the same way as it was previously reported. Credit the member with the proper number of years.

Replacement Membership Card

If a member loses the card, or because of error, it is necessary to provide a replacement card, the Post can provide the replacement card by using one of the blank stock provided. When it is necessary to provide a replacement card, you should report this to the Department in case they expect an accounting of every card used. On the register, make a notation as a written record of your action.

Department Record Replica

There may be times when the left/center section of the 3-part card is lost or destroyed. If this happens, the Post will now provide a replica of this card by using one of its blank cards. When it is necessary to use a blank card for this purpose, it should be reported to your Department Headquarters, in the event they require the Post to account for how, when, and why every card is used. In preparing a replica card to transmit and forward to the Department Headquarters, you should take the first blank available from the supply provided, and type it to show, as much as possible, the same information as it appeared on the original card. We advise you to make a notation as a written record of your action on the membership register.

If You Run Out Of Membership Cards

Every Post is provided extra cards to be used for the purposes noted previously, but if this supply isn't enough, you may request additional cards from your Department.

If it is necessary to ask for additional cards, they will NOT have the number of your Post pre-printed on them – you will have to type the Post number on all three sections of the card when it is issued.

You should also receive new membership register sheets listing the sequential number of the cards.

In all instances, write the member's name and address on the membership register in order to have an accurate record of the membership.

If Duplicate Cards Are Received

You might receive more than one pre-printed card for the same member. If this happens, process one of the cards as usual. On the other card, put an “X” in the box next to “**Duplicate**” in the lower right of the Department Record. Return all three parts of the card to your Department. Strike the duplicate name off your Membership Register and note in the allotted space that the card was returned.

If A Member Has Died

If you receive a card pre-printed for a member who has died, put an “X” in the box opposite the word “**Deceased**” in the lower right corner of the left section. Return the entire card to your Department. Note on the Membership Register that the member is deceased and the card was returned.

If a member dies after dues have already been transmitted, notice of the fact should be reported on a Member Data Form. Deaths can also be reported using a post card or letter, but should include the name, ID number, and last known address. Send the information to your Department; don’t assume they know the member is deceased.

National Headquarters mails dues renewals periodically to unpaid members. Report deaths as soon as possible so they can be removed from the mailing in order to avoid any embarrassment to the family.

If You Receive Cards In Error

If you receive a card pre-printed for someone who is not a member of your Post and is unknown to your Post, put an “X” in the box opposite the word “**Unknown**” in the lower right corner of the left section. Return the entire card to your Department. Note on the Membership Register that the Post does not know the person, and the card was returned to the Department.

Your Post might receive cards that should go to another Post. If this should occur, please send them to the Department with a separate note explaining the return. Do not mark on any of the cards.

If A Member’s Name Is Misspelled

If a member’s name is spelled incorrectly, **use a # 2 pencil** and put an “X” in the box provided on the left section of the 3-part card. **For the correction to be effective, a # 2 pencil should be used.**

Put a line through the misspelled information and enter the corrected name below the pre-printed name on the left and middle sections of the 3-part card. The corrected information should be typed.

Continuous Membership

The pre-printed cards you receive should show the number of years of continuous membership for each member. The figure is advanced one year when the cards are printed (if the member’s record has been processed before April 1).

If the correct years are not on the card, or if they are missing altogether, put an “X” using a # 2 pencil in the correction box in the left section of the 3-part card. Strike out the incorrect number and enter the right information on all parts of the card...also correct the membership register.

If it should be necessary to correct the number of years of continuous membership after the card has been transmitted, send the Member Data Form to effect the change.

Transmitting Membership

Your Department Headquarters will give you specific instructions on how dues are to be transmitted.

Although there is a perforation between the left/center sections of the card, **please don't separate these two sections, if possible.** Both sections should be sent intact to the Department.

On a regular basis (**at least weekly**) send to your Department all completed cards for which dues have been received, including renewals, new members, and transferred members. Send the payment along with the cards to your Department.

If entire cards for deceased members or for unknown members are being sent to the Department at the same time, keep these separate from the renewals for which you are sending along payment.

Write or stamp the date the dues were transmitted in the column headed "Date Transmitted" on your Membership Register. If entire cards for deceased/unknown members are returned, note the date returned on your Membership Register as well.

50, 60, 70, 75, 80 Or 85 Year Certificates

Certificates are printed for members who reach the above milestones in continuous membership.

In January of each year, certificates are issued by National Headquarters in the name of every member credited on the national records with a minimum of 50 years of continuous membership, and who has not previously received this award. A member receives only one of these special awards.

The certificates are sent to each Post having members who qualify. Each Post should receive the certificates in mid-to-late-February. It is suggested the certificates be presented at a special ceremony held in connection with the Legion birthday period, March 15-17.

Your Membership Register will list all members of the Post for whom certificates have previously been issued (see Pages 17-18). If you have members who will reach 50 years of continuous membership this year, be sure to get their dues transmitted in to reach National Headquarters by January 1 so their record will be updated and they receive the certificate. If you have members with 50 or more years of membership, but have never received the certificate, send a Member Data Form to correct their record so they may receive the award they are entitled too (See Pages 21 and 23 for instructions on how to correct continuous membership).

Filing Your Membership Register For Historic Reference

To keep your Membership Register in order and to preserve it from dirt and wear, we urge you to keep the sheets in a loose-leaf binder. There are probably several different types of binders you can buy locally, but binders especially adapted to the Membership Register are also available from National Emblem Sales – check their current catalog for sizes and prices.

The average Post will be able to keep its Membership Registers for several years in the same binder. We suggest when the binder becomes too thick for easy handling, the older registers be removed from the loose-leaf binder and permanently bound in hard covers. Larger cities will have a bookbinder who can do this for a reasonable cost. Posts in smaller towns can check with the nearest public library or school to find the location of a reliable bookbinder.

Keeping all previous years' registers is a good practice...they are your history of past membership.

Supplemental Cards/Rosters

Routinely, the membership cards and rosters for the next year are printed by National in early April, and sent to the Departments for distribution to the various Posts. Time and Place for Post distribution is at the discretion of each Department.

For the balance of the year, until the April-cycle rolls back around, activity changes for the Legion members continue to happen. To help the Post Adjutant stay informed, National provides periodic updates.

Because many members still join for the current year in the spring (between April and June), National provides supplemental Post cards and rosters for this period. These are printed in July, and sent to the respective Department(s) for further distribution. If the Post believes they should have gotten this information, and has not received it by the end of August, it is suggested the Post contact the Department for an explanation.

CARDS – Any cards included would be for those who joined since the pre-printed cards/rosters were done earlier in April.

PRINTOUTS – The information on the printouts relate to the codes in the far-right column with a further description in the *legend* provided at the end of the roster...they cover *new members, address changes, deceased members, and membership transfers (in and out)*.

The overall schedule is as follows:

- ◆ **April** - Initial rosters/cards printed for next membership year.
- ◆ **July** - New members' cards since April and roster to include all changes from April to July.
- ◆ **October** - Changes since July [roster only].
- ◆ **January** - Changes since October [roster only].

Note: Only the first [April] roster will contain the full membership; subsequent rosters will be limited to changes for the time period indicated.

The American Legion's National Emergency Fund

Veterans Helping Veterans



PURPOSE – The National Emergency Fund program is perhaps one of the most visible illustrations of “veterans helping veterans” that the Legion has to offer. This no-strings disaster relief service has helped thousands of Legion members ever since the program was reestablished in 1989. This was a timely if not prophetic movement on the part of the leadership of The American Legion, the National Executive Committee.

During the past decade, a number of outside meteorological phenomena has altered weather conditions. El Nino, La Nina, and several other offbeat weather patterns as a result of meteorological phenomena have collectively made the likelihood of a natural disaster more prominent in every American community. Tornadoes that can level parts of Salt Lake City’s downtown section can be seen in nontraditional settings today such as Vermont. The flooding of the Red River area of Minnesota in 1997 is only surpassed by the fury of hurricanes pounding our seaboard communities. And earthquakes are now even being registered in upstate New York.

Within these communities are veterans and among those veterans are members of The American Legion and their families. That is why they need to know about the National Emergency Fund, how the program works and how to apply. More importantly, it is important for every Post Officer to understand how to prepare for these disasters so that the Legion Post can provide immediate and responsive care to our members affected by these disasters.

ELIGIBILITY – There are no premiums to pay into the program. It is a grant to that Legion member in need. The only requirements on behalf of the Legion member are:

- They must be a current year paid member of The American Legion, Auxiliary or SAL;
- They must be a member in good standing with their post, unit or squadron.
- They must have been a member prior to the date of disaster.

Only one grant per household can be considered. The National Emergency Fund does not cover damages to automobiles, outbuildings (such as sheds and barns), apartments or to businesses. Nor is the NEF program to take the place or supplement insurance compensation. It is only meant to assist our members if they lose, or are displaced from, their homes due to a declared natural disaster. Subsequently, incidents stemming from accidental fires in the home or faulty structural damages do not fall within the confines of the NEF. The key here is "declared natural disasters," which displace our members from their homes.

Legion posts are eligible to receive grants from this fund, providing they meet the established criteria. Your Department Headquarters can provide you with more information regarding Legion Posts.

HOW TO APPLY – NEF grant applications may be obtained by contacting your Department Headquarters or by calling The American Legion National Headquarters at (317) 630-1205. Each application contains instructions explaining what information is required.

The turnaround time for a National Emergency Fund grant depends on how soon the complete application is received at The American Legion National Headquarters, located in Indianapolis, Indiana.

At the very minimum, the NEF application should include:

- Copies of estimates of damage.
- Photographs of the damage.
- Information on Income and Net Worth as outlined on the grant form.
- Description of loss.

Failure to include all the required information could delay the processing of the grant. All supporting documentation and photographs provided in support of the grant application cannot be returned to the applicant.

Once the grant application is completed it must be forwarded to the Department Headquarters where the grants applications are reviewed and damages are assessed. The Department Commander and Adjutant determine the grant amount. The amount of the grant is not to exceed \$1,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for Posts. The Department Commander and Adjutant then sign the grant application and then forward it to National Headquarters.

National Headquarters make the final approval and a check is then issued to that Legion member or to the Post.

CONTRIBUTIONS – Since October 1989, the NEF program has provided over \$3,000,000 in direct financial assistance to Legion family members and posts. All contributions made to this fund are to that Legion member in need. There are no middlemen to deal with, no administrative or fulfillment costs. Every dollar raised goes into a special account and the funds are used solely to assist our members in need.

The contributions, from Legionnaires, American Legion Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion, has enabled thousands of Legion family members to rebuild their homes and lives and has kept Legion Posts from closing.

BE PREPARED! TAKE A PROACTIVE STANCE – The Post Officers are the first lines of assistance to our members when a disaster hits. You are the ones to be on site to provide comfort and to initiate the NEF process. The NEF program is an excellent opportunity for Post Officers to pre-position their posts to provide immediate support as soon as the disaster occurs. This proactive stance involves learning as much as you can and making plans to act. It not only allows you to provide the service needed in your member's time of need, but also allows you to develop partnerships with other agencies within your community to assist one another when disaster strikes.

1. **Know** where your members are! This should happen long before a disaster occurs. Take a look at your membership by addresses and zip codes and plot your membership on a map. That will provide you with a visual overview of where your people are located. You will find this visual to be an invaluable tool once a disaster hits and you are trying to locate your members. Keep the members' addresses and their phone numbers current.
2. **Educate** your Post Officers on NEF and how the process works. This should be done at the new officer orientation each year at the very minimum.
3. **Network** with disaster relief agencies and key community players. There are several agencies within every community that provides initial disaster response and subsequent disaster relief. Within this network you should:
 - a. Make a contact list complete with names, phone numbers and addresses. This list can serve as a quick reference for your officers and for our members when a natural disaster hits the community. These contacts should include at the very minimum the nearest Red Cross agency, Federal Management Agency (FEMA), local civil defense units, National Guard and Reserve units, county and local law enforcement, fire departments and emergency medical services (EMS).
 - b. Participate in disaster relief training sessions whenever possible. Federal, state and local emergency disaster training opportunities can be an investment in providing that immediate response to our

Legionnaires. These training sessions can take the form of seminars, tabletop discussions or hands-on staged exercises. This is an excellent opportunity to educate these other players in disaster response about the National Emergency Fund program. Have the agency head inquire if anyone working there is a Legionnaire, who can assist in connecting the post with him or her.

4. Educate your community about NEF. Don't wait for severe weather season to hit. Start now on educating your community on NEF and the needs of our Legionnaires when a disaster strikes. Hold NEF information meetings at the post and invite the media to attend. Canned news releases on NEF can be obtained through your Department Headquarters or through the National Headquarters.
5. Develop a contingency plan to provide immediate support. Before the National Emergency Fund grant request is even filled out, there may be some immediate assistance that our Legionnaires may need. Medical attention, temporary living accommodations, food and water, immediate financial emergencies or even emotional reassurance are but a few of the repercussions left by a natural disaster. The American Legion Post and those officers who operate that wonderful facility can provide temporary relief on the spot if proper planning is initiated.
 - Meet with your executive board and/or general membership to determine what resources can be provided prior to a natural disaster hitting your area. These resources can include storing up on:
 - Bottled water
 - Insect repellent
 - Flares
 - Candles / matches
 - Blankets
 - Ready to eat meals
 - First aid kits
 - Cots and sleeping bags
 - Basic clothing needs (undergarments, socks)
 - Infant needs (Pampers, Enfamil and other formulas)
 - Toiletries (deodorants, soaps, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shaving cream and razors, tampons)

Other contingency items to consider include temporarily turning the post into a shelter. Here you would have to make arrangements for housing displaced Legionnaires and their families, providing meals, and moral support. Your executive committee can look at alternatives to normal post activities until the crisis is over and your Legionnaires are able to return to their homes or can link up with relatives or friends.

Discuss with the executive committee and your membership who is going to do what when the disaster strikes. That way, each player knows where to go and what their job is. For instance, the adjutant may report as soon as possible to set up the post as a shelter. The commander may report to the command post while the first vice and other officers split up and visit Legionnaires who live in their sector of town.

During a disaster, take cover and take care of your family first. But once the weather is cleared or the situation is such for you to venture out, regroup with your officers and follow the procedures for contacting and assisting our Legionnaires as you established during your disaster training. Review the map, which identifies where your members are and start calling. If possible, and only if cleared by the authorities, venture out to their areas to see if any of our members need our assistance. Bring a camera along, as our Legionnaires may be in a position where they do not have access to one.

BOTTOM LINE – A natural disaster leaves its mark not only on the landscape but also on the individual's psyche for the rest of their lives. Wouldn't it be wonderful for part of that lasting impression to be of The American Legion being there for them in their time of need?

Take the time, do some planning and get into position to help our Legionnaires before, during and after the NEF cycle.