

Military OneSource Podcast — DD Form 93 (Record of Emergency Data)

Episode transcript

Intro voiceover:

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast. Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department, with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit militaryonesource.mil.

Bruce Moody:

Welcome to the podcast. I'm Bruce Moody.

My guest today is Trevor Dean, returning to the podcast. Trevor is a program analyst with the Defense Department's Casualty, Mortuary Affairs, and Military Funeral Honors Program. Trevor, welcome back.

Trevor Dean:

Hi, Bruce. Thank you. It's great to be with you again.

Bruce:

It is good to be with you. We really value having you on this podcast. You bring, of course, a lot of valuable information, but you really manage to do it with incredible empathy and humanity, and I know that today will be no exception.

So, there is a way for service members and DOD employees, civilian employees, for them to list their emergency contacts, in the event of an injury or illness that incapacitates them, if they become missing or if they die. It's called the DD 93, and although there is a form that we're talking about in today's podcast. It's a really, really important one, and so I really want to ask a bunch of questions about it.

But if we could just start by having you, Trevor, just introduce what this form is all about.

Trevor:

All right, thanks Bruce. DD Form 93, it's called the Record of Emergency Data. It's really a mechanism for both service members and DOD civilian employees. And what they do is they list their emergency contacts, like you said before, in the event of an injury, illness that may incapacitate them, if they become missing or if they die.

This form allows service members, really, to communicate their wishes to the military. It includes an allocation of who will receive their unpaid pay and allowances, and the other thing that it does is it allows them to designate beneficiaries or a beneficiary, either way, to receive a death gratuity. And this is for military members only, this specific portion of it. That death gratuity is a \$100,000 compensation for their military service, and what that's supposed to do is it's really designed to help families meet those immediate financial obligations after a death, like housing, food and child care, because they have to wait for those other survivor benefits to kick in.

Bruce:

Yeah, so this is not a small issue at all, not at all. And it goes further than that. It allows for service members to choose a person authorized to direct their remains. Talk about that, if you would.

Trevor:

Oh, absolutely, and we did a podcast recently on the PADD rights, the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition, where members can learn even more about what we're going to talk about here. But what they do on this form is they choose the person, authorize the direct disposition, should they die.

In other words, the person that the military should look to for making any funeral arrangements, decisions regarding the casket, whether they are to be cremated or buried, or any of those personal things that will be done at their funeral service. This part is a very important responsibility to take on, and members should never take any of these decisions lightly.

Bruce:

There are some courses, and there's a lot of information where people can learn more about this, but if you could just give us a sense of what is the best time to maybe review your form, and what is it that you want to review? What is it that you want to check up on or change?

Trevor:

Right, that's a good point, because it should be done at least annually. I would say as a good reminder on your birthday, you go in and you check the designations, and so that means the designations for who will be notified, designations for your beneficiaries and the designation of the PADD.

And so, you do that at least annually, and then there are other times in life, and we can talk about that, with real-world examples and all. But when anything important happens in your life, if things change within your family, with your parents, with your spouse, with anyone else on there that might be one of those designated. And you need to go in, make sure it's all current. If any of them have moved, gotten new phone numbers,

things like that, they need to update it, so the military has the most up-to-date information, so that we can do those things that we need to do on your behalf, in a very timely and dignified fashion that takes care of your family, really.

Bruce:

Yeah, I will take you up on that and ask for some examples.

Trevor:

Oh, certainly. All right, a service member has designated their spouse. So, they go in. They designate their spouse. There's the address and the phone number, and they are also designated to receive the death gratuity, so there's a couple things on there. Notification is one of them. Receiving the death gratuity.

But then, in the meantime, things don't go so well. The member gets divorced and then remarries, and nothing has been done with this form. So, they've remarried, and then if the service member were to die before updating that DD Form 93, the former spouse would be the one who would receive the death gratuity, for example. So those designations are extremely important to take care of you and your family in that time of need.

Bruce:

I would imagine that in the event that nobody gets sick, nobody goes missing, nobody dies, you're still doing a tremendous service to your family, and that is perhaps departing for a deployment, having all of this settled, so that that's one less thing to worry about.

Trevor:

Right. A lot of what we do is peace of mind. We hope that you never need it, but it's that peace of mind that people know who they are. If they've been designated as a PADD, they know that they will be notified, in case there is an injury or an illness or a death. It's about that peace of mind. It's about doing the right thing by your family and ensuring that that information is there, so that on the personnel side, we can do our jobs in making the proper notifications, and then on the beneficiary side, the right people are receiving those benefits when they need it.

Bruce:

Two questions for you. How do you get this form to record your information, and how would you scale it, in terms of complexity, when you're filling out this form?

Trevor:

Sure, so as long as you have your information, it's not super complex, but what I would recommend you do is go to your personnel office. That way, you've got someone there,

an expert, that can help answer any questions that you might have. You can fill out the form there at the personnel office, and then they can act as your witness and sign off on it, and then you're done for the year.

Unless something happens in your family throughout that year and you need to update it, and you just go back to the personnel office and re-accomplish it. It's best to have all the information with you ahead of time. Makes it very easy, very simple to fill out.

Bruce:

We're talking about this really important form, the DD 93. For people who want an additional source of instruction, we have a learning course, a MilLife Learning course. Talk to us about that and what people can expect from this course.

Trevor:

In the MilLife Learning course, it's called "Completing the DD 93." It will walk you through each of those elements and what parts you're responsible for, what you need to fill in, and what it means. It really is a good course to help you understand what it is and what you're doing, and service members need to let their family members know that they've been designated. This is what it's for and why they've made those choices.

It's really a good course. It doesn't take long to complete it. It's on MilLife Learning, and I highly recommend it for service members, DOD civilians, family members, so they can understand what it is.

Bruce:

OK, excellent. We'll get a link in the program notes to the MilLife Learning course. Just a couple of questions more about this form. Is it better to complete this form online or to do it in person?

Trevor:

It can be completed online, and depending on what service you're in, there are different platforms, different applications that you can do that on. But going to your personnel center is probably the best way to do it, because like I said, you've got somebody there who can help explain it, help walk you through it, and then witness the sign-off on it.

Bruce:

Excellent. This is really important information, and as you said, a lot of it, what we're doing here is we're giving a service member and the family real peace of mind. Any final words as we wrap up on this topic?

Trevor:

Yes. I just really would like service members and their families to know that, like I said before, these are really important designations, that it's always something that you should be updating, and like you said, before deployments, of course, on your birthday, any life events. It's just really that protection of your family, to make sure that the right people are listed and the right people will be contacted, and the right people will receive those benefits as beneficiaries.

Bruce:

Excellent, so that is the DD Form 93. In the program notes, we've got the link to the MilLife Learning course and a couple of other links where people can read more about this important form that we hope that they'll keep up to date.

Trevor:

Absolutely.

Bruce:

Yeah, Trevor, thank you again for joining us on the podcast.

Trevor:

Thank you so much, Bruce.

Bruce:

Trevor Dean is program analyst for the Defense Department's Casualty, Mortuary Affairs, and Funeral Honors Program.

I want to remind you that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department, and we want to hear from you. We have a link in the program notes. You can send us a comment, a question or your idea for a future episode. And be sure to subscribe to our podcast wherever you listen to your podcasts, because we cover a wide range of issues to help military families navigate military life.

I'm Bruce Moody. Thank you so much for listening. Take care. Bye-bye.