



Coronavirus (COVID-19)



Guidance on the cremation and burial of those dying with Coronavirus

We have been informed by the Cabinet Office that the infection risk from a deceased person who died with the Coronavirus is no greater than the risk presented by somebody who died of flu. There is more risk of catching the virus from somebody who is living, therefore attention should be paid to minimising the risk from living people by following the Government's guidance on social distancing and good hand hygiene. Funeral services in cemeteries and crematoria are still permitted by the Government, but should be attended by immediate family only, and only where it is safe for them to do so.

Handling coffins

Current guidance is to treat the coffin the same as you would for any other coffin at this time.

For cremation:

- suitable PPE based on a risk assessment
- minimise manual handling
- charge into the cremator as soon after receipt as possible
- disinfect any surfaces the coffin has come into contact with
- dispose of PPE following handling - double bag waste before placing in your normal waste disposal system
- wash hands thoroughly with soap and hot water straight away (everyone involved in handling the coffin), or use a suitable hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available
- If the coffin leaks you will need to do what you would normally do with a body fluid spill

For burial:

- suitable PPE based on a risk assessment
- minimise manual handling
- consider having the coffin taken straight from the hearse or vehicle and lowering into the grave without resting on putlogs, boards etc
- consider using lengths of ropes that can be left in the handles and buried in the grave rather than webbing. The rope must be able to bear the weight of the coffin. The bearers should wear appropriate gloves to prevent rope burns when lowering
- disinfect any surfaces the coffin has come into contact with
- dispose of PPE following handling – double bag waste before placing in your normal waste disposal system
- wash hands thoroughly with soap and hot water straight away (everyone involved in handling the coffin), or use a suitable hand sanitiser if soap and water is not available
- If the coffin leaks you will need to do what you would normally do with a body fluid spill

Please be assured that the risk of catching the Coronavirus from a deceased person is very low. There is more risk from a living person with the virus touching the coffin, therefore this should be restricted to as few people as possible, and, if necessary, the coffin should be disinfected before further handling.