

Deceased Management Advisory Group

Advice on Body Bags, PVC and Coffin Contents

The Deceased Management Advisory Group (DMAG) has received a number of reports concerning body bags, PVC and placing of items in coffins.

DMAG strongly urges funeral directors to follow government advice to use a single body bag, made from materials which **do not** include PVC, and ensure plastic or other items are not placed in the body bag or coffin.

The use of a single body bag is a reasonably common occurrence; however, we have been made aware of 2 or 3 bags and other plastic items being placed in coffins. This is causing a number of difficulties at crematoria, not only is it unlawful, but it may pose a hazard to operators and **may** damage cremators.

All crematoria are required to adhere to statutory Guidance on Cremation, referred to as PGN5/2(12), which identifies a range of products that cannot be included in a cremation. This list specifically requires that:

- PVC and melamine should not be used in coffin construction or furnishings;
- Cardboard coffins should not contain chlorine in the wet strength agent. (e.g. not using polyamidoamine-epichlorhydrin based resin (PAA-E))
- Packaging for stillbirth, neonatal and foetal remains should not include any chlorinated plastics:
- Coffins containing lead or zinc should not be cremated

The rapid combustion of plastics and PVC on insertion damages the cremator control systems, the production of large amounts of smoke clogs analyser filters whilst the PVC emits Hydrogen Chloride in such quantities that it swamps the capacity of the cremator and abatement system to neutralise it. As a result, failures in various parts of the cremator/abatement plant can rapidly occur, which could significantly reduce the capacity of crematoria, thereby impacting on the deceased management process.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Dated 3rd May 2020

