

ICCM Guiding Principles for Burial and Cremation

CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

All cremation and burial facilities shall be managed with competence and efficiency, to ensure that the entire bereavement experience occurs without error or insensitivity, and meets the religious, secular, ethnic and cultural needs of the bereaved.

The service shall comply with all statutory and Health and Safety requirements.

SERVICE SENSITIVITY

The burial or cremation of a human body, whether the deceased be an adult, infant, child or fetus, is a highly emotional occasion for those taking part. Each cemetery and crematorium must be managed to create and maintain an atmosphere of solace and respect throughout the entire proceedings. This sensitivity must extend to all staff and contractors working at facilities, through the application of bereavement sensitive specifications.

Members will respond sympathetically to individual funeral needs and shall give a justifiable reason for refusing any specific request.

STAFF

All staff should possess qualifications and undergo recognised training specific to their duties. The following should be seen as minimum requirements:

Cemetery Chargehands/Sextons - Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme (Course 1)
Senior Crematorium Technicians - Cremation Technicians Training Scheme Certificates
Cemetery Manager - ICCM Cemetery Management Certificate
Crematorium Manager - ICCM Crematorium Management Certificate
Senior/Joint Service Managers should be in possession of, or working towards, the full ICCM Diploma.

The appointment of all staff must emphasise the need for proper conduct and demeanour, as well as technical expertise. Staff must act and speak in a manner that recognises the sensitivity of bereavement, both during and outside working hours, and should not accept gratuities.

All staff should be willing to operate flexible working hours to meet the requirements of the service. Pay and conditions of service should be suitably adapted to reflect such flexibility.

All staff should be identified by name badges.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Every Charter member shall minimise the impact of bereavement upon the environment. This should encourage the greater use of earth friendly materials and environmentally friendly practices, particularly in:

General

- Ensuring the use of suitable coffins and containers used for burial or cremation. The use of plastics should be minimised with natural materials encouraged wherever possible. Zinc or lead lined coffins cannot be cremated.
- Employing the use of the most environmentally friendly materials in the maintenance of grounds
- Recycling of green waste from grounds maintenance works
- Recycling, where law permits, of any other material for which permission of the applicant for cremation or burial has been obtained

Burial

- Ensuring the most effective use of land for burial.
- Where possible providing or partnering a provider of woodland burial
- The use of suitable ground for burial so that water borne pollution shall not occur

Cremation

- Emissions to air are of great concern to the public. All Charter members should actively seek to reduce emissions to the air by the provision of suitable abatement equipment at the earliest possible time.
- Promoting the most effective use of energy within the crematorium. This could include consideration of heat exchange units to capture energy that is currently wasted.
- Ensuring the optimum usage of crematorium plant and equipment including longer operational hours, i.e. holding over cremations.
- Advising that clothing the deceased in clothes made of natural fibre/materials is acceptable whereas plastic, nylon and other synthetic materials are not acceptable due to the impact on the environment via emissions.
- Promoting the recycling of metals resulting from cremation.

INDIVIDUAL DISPOSAL

The importance of human beings as individuals and the manner in which they inter-relate with relatives and friends does not diminish in significance following death. It is important for the bereaved to know that the burial or cremation is individually carried out, unless a bereaved parent chooses a shared burial or cremation and the following requirements must, therefore, be met:-

General conditions

- i) No coffin/container/shroud shall be accepted at a cemetery unless the name of the deceased therein is clearly shown.
- ii) The identity shown on the coffin/container/shroud shall be verified at every funeral.
- iii) If burial is to occur, the body and its coffin/container/shroud shall be placed in the identified grave.
- iv) If cremation is to occur, the body shall be cremated individually and the correct identity shall be maintained throughout the process (not applicable where parents have chosen a shared cremation for their babies).
- v) If requested by the Applicant for Cremation or Burial the lid of the coffin or container may be removed for the duration of the chapel service and subsequently replaced prior to the committal (This action cannot be permitted in cases where cause of death is a notifiable disease).
- vi) A number of cremations have taken place where two related deceased persons were within the same coffin. Whilst such requests are rare they are not unlawful therefore the requirements below should also be considered in the plural. The same applies to both burial and cremation.

Requirements relating to burial

- i. After the coffin/container/shroud and body have been committed into the grave, they shall not be removed or otherwise disturbed except for lawful exhumation, by licence and/or faculty or by the order of a Coroner.
- ii. Immediately after the mourners have departed the graveside, the grave shall be entirely backfilled and made tidy. This work will be completed on the day of the burial and must not extend overnight.

Requirements relating to cremation

- i) A body shall not be removed from the crematorium after the service of committal, except by order of a Coroner or for some other valid reason.
- ii) The container and the body shall be placed in a cremator and cremation commenced no later than 72 hours after the service of committal. Where cremation may not be carried out on the same day, the Applicant for Cremation shall be notified.

- iii) The coffin or container with the body inside shall not be opened or otherwise disturbed after the committal other than in exceptional circumstances and then only in the presence of and with the permission of the Applicant for Cremation, or for a lawful purpose as directed by a higher authority.
- iv) Once a coffin or container has been placed in a cremator, it shall not be disturbed until the process of cremation is complete.
- v) On completion, the whole of the ashes shall be removed from the cremator and reduced to granular form, except where this is specifically not requested, and shall be disposed of or released according to the instructions of the Applicant for Cremation.
- vi) Ashes placed in the Garden of Remembrance shall be treated with reverence and respect. If strewn, they should be obscured by soil or brushing. Where a local practice of strewing in the form of a cross or other pattern has developed, it is acceptable providing it does not result in the unsightly build-up or prolonged visibility of the ashes. Ashes must be labelled and released in suitable, unused containers, and where sent by registered post or secure carrier, capable of withstanding transit without damage.
- vii) The terms 'ashes' and 'cremated remains' are one and the same and are defined as *'all that is left in the cremator at the end of the cremation process and following the removal of any metal'*.
- viii) Consent must be obtained from the applicant for cremation to remove any metal from the ashes irrespective of whether the metal is recycled or buried within the grounds at the crematorium.

COMMERCIALISATION OF PRODUCTS OR RESIDUES OF CREMATION

The products or residues of a cremation shall not be used for any commercial purpose

INSPECTION

Everyone has the right to inspect the crematorium or cemetery during normal working hours, upon application to the manager of the facility.

The ICCM Guiding Principles will be regularly reviewed, and updated where appropriate, to ensure that they remain relevant and meet the changing needs of the bereaved, the environment and the society in which we all live.

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