



PROCEDURES FOR Identifying Bodies and Cremated Remains

Easy Steps to Compliance

State Law Requires you to:

1. Develop, implement, and maintain a written procedure for identifying a body.
2. Develop, implement, and maintain a written procedure for identifying cremated remains.

Procedures for identifying a body

1. The procedure must include how you intend to identify the body from the time you retrieve the body until burial or other disposition.
2. The body must be identified at all times and in all stages of preparation, funeral, burial, and/or cremation. From the time you retrieve a body, an identification document must accompany that body at all times.
3. You must inspect the body received from another institution and determine if there is documentation which identifies the decedent. If none is found, the funeral director must immediately contact the other funeral home or institution which sent you the body to inform them that there is no identification. You are not responsible for correcting the error. Rather, the other funeral home or institution must determine the identification of the cremated remains and place the documentation on or with the body. Once identified, it is a good idea to have one of the decedent's relatives or personal representatives view the body and confirm his/her identity.
4. If you retrieve the body from a residence or family home, you do not have to immediately identify the body. You can wait until you have loaded the body into the removal vehicle or when you arrive back at the funeral home. If you choose to wait until you arrive back at the funeral home, you must identify the body immediately (before any other activity).

Procedures for identifying cremated remains

1. The procedure must include how you intend to identify cremated remains from the time you retrieve the cremated remains until burial or release.
2. The cremated remains must be identified at all times. From the time you retrieve cremated remains, an identification document must accompany the cremated remains at all times.
3. You must inspect cremated remains received from another institution and determine if there is documentation which identifies the decedent. If none is found, the funeral director must immediately contact the crematory or other institution which sent you the cremated remains to inform them that there is no identification. You are not responsible for correcting the error. Rather, the crematory or other institution must determine the identification of the cremated remains and place the documentation within the cremated remains container.

Identification documents:

1. An identification document can be in the form of a tag, disk, label, or paper document.
2. An identification document can be temporary during the preparation stages; however, a permanent identification document must be placed on or near the body or in the casket prior to final disposition (if not cremated). You can utilize any type of permanent identification document you wish, as long as it is protected from decay, decomposition or other breakdown. An example would be a paper document which has been laminated with heavy plastic or a paper document sealed in a leak-proof and non-biodegradable plastic bag. The method you choose does not have to be expensive. Be creative.
3. The permanent identification documentation can only be placed on the body after the body has been disinfected, to prevent possible decomposition of the document.
4. If the body has been cremated, a permanent identification document must be placed in or on the cremated remains (a primary responsibility of the crematory).

Reporting Identification Errors

You must report your own identification errors to the Board within 5 business days of the error. If another institution made the error, you are not required to report it. Only crematories and funeral homes are required to report such errors to the Board. If the identification error was made by a nursing home or hospital, the Board has no legal authority to take action. We suggest that you report errors from these institutions to the appropriate authority who may have the legal power to take action. For instance, if a physician makes the error, you may want to report it to the Board of Medicine. Or if a nurse makes the error, you may want to report it to the Board of Registered Nurses. There is generally a state or federal agency which regulates these other institutions in some manner and should be informed of problems existing in these institutions.

This information sheet is designed to aid you in complying with state funeral laws.

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