

Cremated Remains Management Policy

1. Purpose

This policy establishes clear, respectful, and consistent arrangements for the receipt, identification, storage, handling, release, transfer, and final disposition of cremated human remains. It is intended to protect the dignity of the deceased, support the lawful management of cremated remains, and maintain accurate records and chain of custody.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all personnel who receive, handle, store, transport, release, or otherwise manage cremated human remains on behalf of the organisation.

3. Guiding Principles

All cremated remains must be:

- Treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity at all times.
- Clearly identified and traceable from receipt through final release or disposition.
- Stored securely and in conditions appropriate to their containers.
- Handled only by authorised personnel.
- Accompanied by accurate documentation and records.
- Released only to an appropriately authorised person or organisation following verification.

4. Receipt and Identification

Upon receipt of cremated remains, authorised staff must:

1. Verify the identity of the deceased against the accompanying documentation.
2. Check that the container is appropriately labelled and securely sealed.
3. Record the date and time of receipt, identity of the deceased, source, condition of the container, and name of the receiving officer/member of staff.
4. Report any discrepancy, damage, missing documentation, or uncertainty about identity immediately to the designated manager.
5. Do not open, transfer, or otherwise disturb the contents unless authorised and operationally necessary.

5. Storage and Security

Cremated remains must be kept in a secure, designated area with access restricted to authorised personnel.

The storage area should:

- Be protected from unauthorised access, loss, theft, damage, or environmental hazards.
- Maintain appropriate security controls and access records.
- Keep each set of remains individually identifiable.
- Prevent commingling or accidental substitution.
- Be subject to regular checks and documented reconciliation against the organisation's records.

6. Chain of Custody

Every movement or change of custody must be documented.

The record should include:

- Name or unique reference of the deceased.
- Date and time of transfer.
- Reason for transfer.
- Person releasing the remains.
- Person receiving the remains.
- Destination, where applicable.
- Confirmation of the condition and identification of the container.
- No member of staff should transfer custody without completing the required documentation.

7. Release of Cremated Remains

Cremated remains may only be released following confirmation that the recipient is legally and appropriately authorised to receive them.

Before release, staff must:

- Verify the recipient's identity.
- Confirm the recipient's authority or entitlement to receive the remains.

- Check the identification details against the organisation's records.
- Obtain a signed acknowledgement of receipt where appropriate.
- Update the central record to show the date, time, recipient, and final destination.

Where there is uncertainty regarding entitlement, staff must suspend release and refer the matter to the designated manager or appropriate legal authority.

8. Transport and Transfer

Where cremated remains are transported or transferred between locations, they must remain securely contained and clearly identified.

The organisation must use appropriate transportation arrangements and maintain documentation demonstrating continuity of custody throughout the journey.

9. Unclaimed Cremated Remains

Reasonable and documented efforts should be made to identify and contact the person or persons entitled to receive unclaimed cremated remains.

Where cremated remains have not been collected within six (6) months of the date of receipt, and reasonable attempts to contact the authorised recipient have been unsuccessful, the remains will be returned to the crematorium for appropriate dispersal, subject to applicable legislation, regulatory requirements, and the crematorium's procedures. The organisation must maintain a record of all contact attempts, notifications, decisions, the date the six-month period expires, and the date and method of return to the crematorium. Where appropriate, the authorised person should be notified in advance that failure to collect the cremated remains within six months may result in their return to the crematorium for dispersal.

10. Lost, Damaged, or Misidentified Remains

Any suspected loss, damage, substitution, misidentification, unauthorised access, or other incident involving cremated remains must be reported immediately to the designated manager.

The organisation must preserve relevant records and investigate the incident in accordance with its incident-reporting procedures. Where required, the matter must be referred to the appropriate external authority.

11. Confidentiality and Records

Records relating to cremated remains must be maintained securely and handled in accordance with applicable data-protection, confidentiality, records-management, and legal requirements.

Records should be retained for the period specified by applicable legislation and the organisation's records-retention schedule.

12. Responsibilities

Management is responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures, facilities, training, and controls are in place. Authorised staff are responsible for following this policy, maintaining accurate records, and immediately reporting discrepancies or incidents.

All personnel must treat cremated remains with dignity and must not undertake any unauthorised handling, transfer, photography, disclosure, or disposal.

13. Review

This policy should be reviewed periodically and whenever there is a significant change in legislation, regulatory requirements, organisational procedures, or operational practice.

Policy owner: Mr R Marshall (Owner)

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