

Cremation

Cremation is the practice of disposing of human remains by reducing them to ashes in specially constructed furnaces called retorts. The disposition of the ashes is then left up to the family. Some choose to inter them in crypts, called niches, some choose to display them in urns and others may choose to bury or scatter them.

There is evidence of cremation from as far back as the Neolithic period, where pottery vessels from that time have been discovered containing the cremated remains of individuals. These vessels have been discovered throughout Europe. Roman aristocrats chose cremation as their preferred method of disposition. However, between the 3rd and 19th centuries, Christianity became widely accepted and its doctrines forbade cremation. The belief was that the body would not be resurrected if it were destroyed. Orthodox Jews, the Eastern Orthodox Christian churches and Muslims still forbid the practice of cremation. Other groups of people, especially in India continue to practice cremation and it is now accepted among most Jews and Christians. Buddhist, Sikhs and Hindus practice cremation also.

In 1876, the first crematorium in the United States was built in Washington, Pennsylvania.

There are generally many misconceptions associated with the practice of cremation. Among them is that cremation eliminates the need or option of having a more “traditional” funeral or memorial service. Many of our families choose to have additional services in conjunction with the cremation. Visitations can be held with or without the body being present. Cremation caskets are available for our families if they choose to have the body present. The casketed body can also be present for a church or chapel service. The cremation casket can then be used to cremate the body in.

Following are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about cremation.

What Is Cremation?

To begin with, it is probably easier to describe what cremation isn't. Cremation is not the final disposition of the remains, nor is it a type of funeral service. Rather, it is a process of reducing the human body to bone fragments using high heat and flame

Is A Casket Needed For Cremation?

No, a casket is not required for cremation. All that is usually required by most states is an alternative container constructed of wood or cardboard, which is cremated with the body. In some states, no container is required. North Carolina does require that an alternative container be used.

Is Embalming Required Prior To Cremation?

Absolutely not and it is against the law for a funeral home to tell you otherwise. If a family chooses to have a visitation with the body present, it may be necessary to have the body embalmed, allowing for the casket to be open.

Can The Body Be Viewed Without Embalming?

Yes, most cremation providers allow immediate family members to briefly view the deceased prior to cremation.

Can The Family Witness The Cremation?

Yes, in many cases, cremation providers will allow family members to be present when the body is placed into the cremation chamber. In fact, some religious groups include this as part of their funeral custom.

Is Cremation Accepted By All Religions?

Today most religions allow cremation except for Orthodox Jewish, Islamic, Eastern Orthodox and a few Fundamentalist Christian faiths. The Catholic Church accepts cremation as long as it is not chosen for reasons that are contrary to Christian teachings.

Can An Urn Be Brought Into Church?

Nearly all Protestant Churches allow for the urn to be present during the memorial service. Most Catholic Churches also allow the cremated remains to be present during the Memorial Mass. In fact, if the family is planning on a memorial service, we encourage the cremated remains be present as it provides a focal point for the service.

What Can Be Done With The Cremated Remains?

There are many options and laws vary state to state. Remains can be buried in a cemetery lot or cremation garden, inurned in a columbarium, kept at home, or scattered.

Do People Choose Cremation Only To Save Money?

While some people select cremation for economy, many choose this option for other reasons. The simplicity and dignity of cremation, environmental concerns, and the flexibility cremation affords in ceremony planning and final disposition all add to its increasing popularity.

How Can I Be Sure I Receive The Correct Remains?

All reputable cremation providers have developed rigorous sets of operating policies and procedures in order to maximize the level of service and minimize the potential for human error. If you have questions, ask the cremation providers what procedures they use.

How Long Does The Actual Cremation Take?

It depends on the weight of the individual. For an average size adult, cremation takes from two to three hours at normal operating temperature between 1,500 degrees F to 2,000 degrees F.

What Happens After The Cremation Is Complete?

All organic bone fragments, which are very brittle, as well as non-consumed metal items are "swept" into the back of the cremation chamber and into a stainless steel cooling pan. All non-consumed items, like metal

from clothing, hip joints, and bridgework, are separated from the cremated remains. This separation is accomplished through visual inspection as well as using a strong magnet for smaller and minute metallic objects. Items such as dental gold and silver are non-recoverable and are commingled in with the cremated remains. Remaining bone fragments are then processed in a machine to a consistent size and placed into a temporary or permanent urn, selected by the family.

Can Two Cremations Be Performed At Once?

No. Not only is it illegal to do so, most modern cremation chambers are not of sufficient size to accommodate more than one adult. Thus it would be a practical impossibility to conduct multiple cremations simultaneously.

What Do The Cremated Remains Look Like?

Cremated remains resemble coarse sand and are whitish to light grey in color. The remains of an average size adult usually weigh between four to six pounds.

Are All The Cremated Remains Returned?

With the exception of minute and microscopic particles, which are impossible to remove from the cremation chamber and processing machine, all of the cremated remains are given back to the family.

Do I Need An Urn?

An urn is not required by law. However, an urn may be desired if there is to be a memorial service or the remains are to be interred in a cemetery. If an urn is not purchased through us, or provided by the family, the cremated remains will be returned in a temporary plastic container.

Do you have additional questions?

Please feel free to contact us here at the funeral home. You may call us at 336 226-1622 or email us at info@richandthompson.com.

Cremation Regulations Specific to North Carolina

North Carolina requires a 24 hour period to elapse between the time of death and the cremation.

A death certificate must be signed by the attending physician prior to the cremation taking place. If the death falls under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner, the yellow copy of the death certificate is permission to cremate.

If the death occurs in a licensed nursing facility (nursing home, hospital) or under the care of a licensed Hospice (does not include home health care providers), then you do not have to have a medical examiner's consent to cremate.

If the death occurs outside of one of the above, the medical examiner must sign a cremation authorization. A fee of \$ 50.00 must be paid to him by the family.

The person or person's with the legal right to sign a cremation authorization must do so prior to the cremation taking place.

The body must be placed in an alternative container prior to handling by the crematory staff.

Embalming is NOT required prior to cremation unless certain attendant services that do require it are selected.

NC Board of Funeral Service
Fact Sheet Concerning Cremation in North Carolina
(Updated June 2009)

- 1. The North Carolina Board of Funeral Service (the "Board") is responsible for licensing and inspecting crematories in North Carolina.**
- 2. There are currently 90 crematories in North Carolina.**
- 3. Last year (2008) over 23,000 cremations were conducted in North Carolina.**
- 4. North Carolina also has 740 funeral homes. Most of the crematories in North Carolina are associated with a funeral home.**
- 5. All crematories operating for the cremation of human bodies in North Carolina must be licensed and inspected annually by the Board. There are no exceptions to this licensing requirement for crematories that only do business with funeral homes and not directly with consumers.**
- 6. North Carolina has three full-time inspectors for funeral homes and crematories. The Board's inspectors inspect not only the facility itself, but also the records that the Board requires the crematories to maintain.**
- 7. In North Carolina crematories must complete and maintain Board prescribed documents which track the decedent through the cremation process.**
- 8. If the consumer picks up the cremated remains, the consumer must sign BFS Form 56D to acknowledge receipt of the cremated remains. If the cremated remains are mailed to the consumer, the crematory must send the cremated remains by certified mail with return receipt. When the crematory receives the return receipt, it must attach the return receipt to BFS Form 56.**
- 9. Crematories must file monthly reports with the Board. The reports include a list of each person who was cremated within the past**

month. The Board charges substantial penalties for submitting the report late.

10. North Carolina law limits access to crematories while a cremation is taking place. Nonetheless, family members may be present during a cremation if they wish. Thus, consumers have the option of being 100% certain the ashes they receive are the ashes of their loved ones.