

CREMATION

Cremation offers a number of benefits for cities like Cape Town where cemetery space is in short supply. Not only is it affordable, it also helps alleviate the ongoing challenge around lack of burial space.

A cremation furnace is designed to take one body per coffin at a time. High temperatures and vapourisation reduce the body to gases and bone fragments. These cremated remains are extracted separately to ensure that the bereaved receives ashes that are unique to the deceased.

Points to remember

- No jewellery is allowed into the cremation chamber.
- A pacemaker must be removed from the body prior to cremation to prevent its potential explosion, which could damage the cremator, as well as resultant air pollution from the release of mercury from the pacemaker's batteries.

Disposal of ashes

- While the scattering of ashes is not harmful to the environment, the City requests that people take care when sprinkling ashes in public spaces, for example, in the sea or in a botanical garden, to ensure that other people in the area are not affected.
- The City has capacity for tastefully designed niche walls and niche boxes, where urns containing ashes may be buried behind a commemorative plaque.

WHO TO CONTACT

For further information and costs, contact your nearest City of Cape Town cemetery booking office.

HOURS:

Monday to Friday from 7:30 to 16:00

OR VISIT:

www.capetown.gov.za/en/parks/facilities/pages/cemeteries.aspx

NORTHERN DISTRICT:

021 550 1052/3

SOUTHERN DISTRICT:

021 710 8235/8325

CENTRAL DISTRICT:

021 929 4561/2

EASTERN CEMETERY:

021 900 1902/1659/1676



CITY OF CAPE TOWN | ISIXEKO SASEKAPA | STAD KAAPSTAD

THIS CITY WORKS FOR YOU

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT PAPERWORK WILL AN UNDERTAKER REQUIRE TO BOOK A BURIAL OR CREMATION?

- Medical certificate B1663
- ID document of the deceased
- Address of the deceased

The undertaker will provide the City Parks Booking Clerk with the burial order.

MUST A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY ACCOMPANY A BURIAL?

No.

WHAT OPTIONS ARE CURRENTLY AVAILABLE?

There are monumental graves, berm graves, public graves, crypts in the mausoleum and cremations.

WHAT IS A MAUSOLEUM?

A mausoleum is an above-ground grave containing crypts designed to hold human remains in coffins. Once a coffin is entombed, the crypt is sealed and a front is attached. The same procedure applies for a niche, which accommodates an urn containing cremated remains.

WHAT IS A FAMILY GRAVE?

These accommodate family members who wish to be laid to rest together. Family graves are private and may be used to house ashes or several coffins. They also save space.

WHO DO I PAY?

Normally the client pays the undertaker and the undertaker pays the cemetery booking office. It is not necessary for money to be paid to cemetery superintendents.

WHAT IF I CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY?

Provision is made for indigent burials. Contact the City's cemetery booking office for more information.

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CREMATIONS?

You can contact Independent Crematoriums South Africa (ICSA) on +27 (23) 347 0905.

HOW DO I KNOW I WILL GET THE RIGHT REMAINS?

All crematoria have a way of uniquely identifying remains and families can rest assured that the correct remains are handed over.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO SEND REMAINS TO OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY OR OVERSEAS?

Yes. Your undertaker will arrange this for you.

WHAT ARE THE LEGAL FORMALITIES REGARDING CREMATION?

ICSA will arrange for the completion of statutory forms for cremation. If you are the executor, next of kin, or are authorised by either to do so, you must sign the Statutory Application for cremation before a Commissioner of Oaths.

WHAT ELSE DO I HAVE TO SIGN?

You must sign an ICSA document confirming your wishes for cremation. It is best to decide how to dispose of the remains quickly but, if you are undecided, ICSA can store the remains for two months.

IS CREMATION AN AID TO THE CONCEALING OF A CRIME BY ELIMINATING EVIDENCE?

No. The primary cause of death must be ascertained before permission is given by the



CEMETERIES AND BURIAL INFORMATION



CITY OF CAPE TOWN | ISIXEKO SASEKAPA | STAD KAAPSTAD

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CITY PARKS

DEALING WITH INTERMENT

Amid the trauma of dealing with the death of a loved one, friend or family member, one of the first things to consider, if responsibility falls to you, is how to dispose of the body.

Often the first consideration is interment in a cemetery, but Cape Town's existing cemeteries are in great demand and in short supply.

Prompted by changing attitudes towards traditional burials and the shortage of land for new burial grounds, the City of Cape Town's City Parks Department is developing more cemeteries and creating alternative options, like mausoleums and modular graves, for those seeking final resting places for their loved ones.

Practical challenges

There are practical considerations around the development and management of land for in-ground burials, and some communities wish to follow their own traditions for interment.

Available land that is not earmarked for housing and biodiversity conservation undergoes environmental impact assessments to determine suitability and investigate groundwater conditions in line with legislation on in-ground burials.

City Parks urges people to consider the financial implications and ecological impact of their decisions when laying their loved ones to rest. It is essential that more people take responsibility for this by communicating their wishes for interment in a current will or by telling their loved ones what they would prefer.

Proposed by-law

Meanwhile, an integrated by-law is proposed to manage cemeteries and crematoriums, to support the dignified disposal of human remains and to regulate funeral undertakers. Its content will provide peace of mind for the bereaved, who seek a safe, secure and respectful environment for their dearly departed.



DEALING WITH INTERMENT

Choosing your coffin

Bodies are usually buried in coffins at a legislated depth in the ground. From at least six feet under, bodies are starved of the oxygen required for natural decomposition. This results in their production of the greenhouse gas, methane, which is considered to be the second largest contributor to global warming.

To facilitate decomposition in the healthiest, most environmentally friendly way, care needs to be taken in choosing the coffin. Coffins made of wood are preferred. Lead or metal caskets are not permitted as they may hamper the natural decay of the body and may release poisons into the soil. The most environmentally friendly wood is FSC-certified from a sustainable forest.

Wooden coffins should be untreated and free of metal adornments and chemical glue to prevent toxins penetrating the ground.

Elaborate coffin lining or cushioning material is also detrimental to the environment, once it starts to decay.

The Muslim (and Buddhist) practice of burial in a simple cotton shroud is the least destructive option and is permitted in designated grounds.

PRIVATE GRAVES

Full monumental graves (illustrated far left)

Certain cemeteries allow the erection of both vertical and horizontal private memorial works, which may include a headstone, cross or plaque, or a commemorative grave demarcation like a slab, railing or stone chips.

Full monumental graves are laid head-to-head, flanked by pathways. This is an uneconomical layout and attracts the highest price. The City therefore encourages families to consider reopening graves to accommodate a second or third burial. There is also the reduction burial option, which involves exhuming remains in older graves and placing them in a smaller box for even deeper burial to free up space for one or two more coffins.

Owners of monumental graves may alter or add to these works if they apply for a memorial works permit.

Berm burials (illustrated left)

Berm graves are private graves and allow a second burial of a family member on top of another coffin. Only headstones are permitted making these the more aesthetically and financially attractive option.

The absence of pathways saves space and eases upkeep of the cemetery, which results in a better ambience.

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NON-PRIVATE GRAVES

Public graves

Public graves are used for more than one burial. They have economic and ecological benefits. The first coffin is buried at a two-metre depth, allowing space for a second coffin (of an unrelated person) to be buried after five years.

No permanent memorials are permitted. A wooden cross may be used to demarcate the first burial, but it may be removed by the City after five years to enable a second coffin to be buried and a new cross to be installed.

ABOVE-GROUND BURIALS

Mausoleums (illustrated below)

The first mausoleum dates back to 353 BC and the death of King Mausollos, a provincial governor in Persia. He was buried in what became known as the Mausoleum of Mausollos, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, now in ruins in present-day Turkey.

A mausoleum has been built in Maitland cemetery and is due to commence operations in 2011. This building-shaped memorial is ideal for above-ground burials in areas where land is limited or water-saturated. It is therefore ideal for the Western Cape environment.

A mausoleum may have larger numbers of crypts (there are 144 in Maitland), which may be stacked three to five high. Modern public mausoleums use activated carbon ventilation systems to neutralise all odours and promote rapid body decomposition. The crypt is sealed at the front with concrete, then an engraved granite tablet, so that there is no risk of theft.

A mausoleum is easy to keep clean, may allow more than one interment, and has the least environmental impact of the current burial options.

Modular grave boxes

On land where the winter water table is less than one metre underground, the soil is rocky or soil conditions make digging graves difficult, above-ground crypts can be made to look like in-ground graves. Concrete bricks are used to build a honeycomb grave structure enclosing two graves, which can be topped with a mound of turf or grass for a natural effect. Modular grave boxes are not yet available as a burial choice in Cape Town.

