



From The NC Board of Funeral Service.....

As the Coronavirus continues to spread across the United States, it has direct and immediate impact on North Carolina. With regard to the practice of funeral service, the NC Board of Funeral Service will send you regular updates on the crisis as more information is announced at both the state and federal levels.

As an important first step, please visit the Board website at www.ncbfs.org for links to current, critical sources of information regarding the virus and its impact on our state and profession.

UPDATE TO LICENSEES: NFDA, ICCFA Announcements; Funeral Professions Essential; Letter to the Governor; VA Cemeteries *March 20, 2020*

Professional Association News and Letter to Governor Cooper

The National Funeral Directors Association [NFDA] has issued a press release announcing that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has named funeral practitioners as "critical infrastructure workers" which affirms our industries vital role in responding to the current pandemic. Designation as an "essential service" is extremely important if Governor Cooper declared a "shelter-in-place" requirement for North Carolina. The designation enables priority access to Personal Protective Equipment [PPE] and to receive other necessary supplies in the preparation and disposition of decedents.

Similarly, the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association [ICCFA] has urged jurisdictions implementing such restrictions to identify funeral establishments and professionals as "Essential Businesses." The ICCFA defines "Essential Businesses" as *"licensed funeral homes, crematories, cemeteries, as well as all suppliers of funeral products to funeral service providers, which provide essential services that are critical to the health, safety and sanitation of the community."*

Board President Mark Blake raised this issue earlier this week after the State of California imposed "shelter-in-place" restrictions as well as other jurisdictions across the country. Learning that some of these declarations did not recognize funeral professions as "essential," Mr. Blake wrote to Governor Cooper expressing the Board's concerns. A copy of Mr. Blake's letter can be found on the Board website on the page dedicated to the Coronavirus pandemic.

New Procedures at National Cemeteries In Response To The Coronavirus

Following is an extract from the U.S. Veterans Affairs in an open letter to Funeral Directors:

All Department of VA National Cemeteries are open and will continue to provide interments for Veterans and eligible individuals. However, the National Cemetery Administration [NCA] is continuing to adjust its services in light of the best practices urged by the CDC in response to the COVID-19 epidemic. As a result, on Friday, March 20th, the NCA will only conduct committal services at our 142

cemeteries nationwide for groups of 10 or fewer people. Larger groups will be asked to reduce their numbers or be refused service. In addition, families should know that volunteer veterans honor guards may no longer be providing services at all cemeteries.

Starting March 23, 2020, as a matter of public health and safety, committal services and the rendering of military funeral honors, whether by military personnel or volunteer organizations, will not be conducted until further notice at VA national cemeteries. Immediate family members (limited to no more than 10 individuals) of the deceased may choose to witness the interment if desired. There is no service involved with witnessing an interment. Families will be able to view the interment of their loved ones from a safe distance.

We are asking for your assistance in communicating the changes in operations to families that have interments scheduled and contact honors providers to cancel their services. Please contact the national cemetery where the interment is scheduled as soon as possible if the family wishes to postpone the interment.

The National Cemetery Scheduling Office in St. Louis will continue to provide scheduling services for the duration of the current emergency. To schedule a burial, please call 800.535.1117, option 1.

NC 211 : Statewide Resource for COVID-19

Governor Roy Cooper has announced that 211 is the number to call for assistance and resources related to the COVID-19 coronavirus.

NC 211 is an information and referral service, operated by United Way of North Carolina, where families and individuals can obtain free and confidential information on health and human service resources within their community 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Resources are available in most languages. North Carolinians can text COVIDNC to 898211 to receive general information and updates about COVID-19.

Individuals who have specific needs related to food, shelter, energy assistance, housing, parenting resources, health care, substance abuse treatment, as well as specific resources for older adults and for persons with disabilities, and much more should dial 211 or TTY 888-892-1162 for assistance.

Establishment Permit Certificates

Board staff have been working diligently to print and mail permit certificates to all licensed funeral establishments and crematories, but please expect some delay as a result of temporary changes in staffing and operations at the Board office as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. We will make every effort to resume the distribution of wall permits as quickly as we can. We appreciate your patience.
