

An Advisory To Licenseesfrom 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.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION & UPDATES FOR LICENSEES

WAKE COUNTY PROCLAMATION FOR STAY-AT-HOME ORDER LAPSES APRIL 30

[Following is the text of a news release from Wake County:]

Wake County Board of Commissioners Chairman Greg Ford signed a proclamation Wednesday allowing the county's Stay-at-Home order to lapse at 11:59 p.m. on April 30.

Starting May 1, 11 of the county's 12 municipalities (Cary; Fuquay-Varina; Garner; Holly Springs; Knightdale; Morrisville; Raleigh; Rolesville; Wake Forest; Wendell; and Zebulon) and portions of Angier, Clayton and Durham located within Wake County, will follow Gov. Cooper's Stay-at-Home order. The Town of Apex is expected to issue its own proclamation.

"We put our order in place in late March to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Wake County, one day before the Governor issued the state-wide Stay-at-Home order," said Chairman Ford. "Our community was affected first by the virus, making it vital that we act more swiftly. But now that there is community spread and we are all fighting to slow the spread collectively, it's appropriate to follow the state's order, which provides some additional flexibility to our residents."

Gov. Cooper's order remains in effect through May 8. It directs people to stay at home – except to visit essential businesses, exercise outdoors or help a family member. Specifically, the order bans gatherings of more than 10 people and directs everyone to physically stay at least six feet apart from others **but does allow gatherings for funerals of no more than 50 people.**

ON-LINE CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES INCREASE

While several CE course providers and sponsors have postponed or cancelled in-person instruction, others have increased the number of courses offered online. Some sponsors have converted their classroom-based courses to webinars to enable licensees to participate interactively without physically attending the course. The course cancellations and postponements as well as the shift to webinar instruction is in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of virus transmission in settings where people

congregate. The Board encourages licensees to continuously check the continuing education listings which are found on the Board's homepage at www.ncbfs.org.

The Board is closely monitoring the potential impact of the pandemic on its continuing education program. The Board plans to post an informational video on its website of a recent presentation on the Coronavirus and its implications for funeral service. This presentation was jointly sponsored by Padgett & King Funeral Home in Forest City, NC, and Washburn & Dorsey Funeral Home in Bostic, NC.

COMPLIANCE INSPECTIONS TO RESUME

When Governor Cooper issued Executive Order 121 which required the closure of non-essential business and asked citizens to stay-at-home as an important way to mitigate the spread of the virus, the Board suspended compliance inspections. The suspension of inspections was necessary to reduce the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus among licensees, funeral home and crematory staff, and Board staff. With the Governor's announcement of a plan for phased relaxation of the stay-at-home restrictions after May 8th, we are resuming compliance inspections with some limits. Inspections staff in each region will be equipped with appropriate protective equipment to wear when going on-site to conduct an inspection, and inspections will be limited to establishments within commuting distance from the inspector's home base.

From the CDC

Following are questions/answers pertaining to funeral service from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention website:

Am I at risk if I go to a funeral or visitation service for someone who died of COVID-19?

There is currently no known risk associated with being in the same room at a funeral or visitation service with the body of someone who died of COVID-19.

Am I at risk if I touch someone who died of COVID-19 after they have passed away?

COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning how it spreads. The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to mainly spread from close contact (i.e., within about 6 feet) with a person who is currently sick with COVID-19. The virus likely spreads primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory infections spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. This type of spread is not a concern after death.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

People should consider not touching the body of someone who has died of COVID-19. Older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions are at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness. There may be less of a chance of the virus spreading from certain types of touching, such as

holding the hand or hugging after the body has been prepared for viewing. Other activities, such as kissing, washing, and shrouding should be avoided before, during, and after the body has been prepared, if possible. If washing the body or shrouding are important religious or cultural practices, families are encouraged to work with their community's cultural and religious leaders and funeral home staff on how to reduce their exposure as much as possible. At a minimum, people conducting these activities should wear disposable gloves. If splashing of fluids is expected, additional personal protective equipment (PPE) may be required (such as disposable gown, face shield or goggles and N-95 respirator).

Cleaning should be conducted in accordance with manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time). Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. After removal of PPE, perform hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available. Soap and water should be used if the hands are visibly soiled.

What do funeral home workers need to know about handling decedents who had COVID-19?

A funeral or visitation service can be held for a person who has died of COVID-19. Funeral home workers should follow their routine infection prevention and control precautions when handling a decedent who died of COVID-19. If it is necessary to transfer a body to a bag, follow Standard Precautions including additional personal protective equipment (PPE) if splashing of fluids is expected.

For transporting a body after the body has been bagged, disinfect the outside of the bag with a product with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.). Wear disposable nitrile gloves when handling the body bag.

Embalming can be conducted. During embalming, follow Standard Precautions including the use of additional PPE if splashing is expected (e.g. disposable gown, face shield or goggles and N95 respirator). Wear appropriate respiratory protection if any procedures will generate aerosols or if required for chemicals used in accordance with the manufacturer's label. Wear heavy-duty gloves over nitrile disposable gloves if there is a risk of cuts, puncture wounds, or other injuries that break the skin. Additional information on how to safely conduct aerosol-generating procedures is in the CDC's Postmortem Guidance. Cleaning should be conducted in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

After cleaning and removal of PPE, perform hand hygiene by washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water is not available. Soap and water should be used if the hands are visibly soiled.

Decedents with COVID-19 can be buried or cremated, but check for any additional state and local requirements that may dictate the handling and disposition of the remains of individuals who have died of certain infectious diseases.

Important Links

If you have not already done so, we encourage you to check the websites for the National Funeral Directors Association [NFDA] and the National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association [NFDMA] for a wide range of information and resources for funeral professionals in responding to the pandemic.

NFDA www.nfda.org

NFDMA www.nfdma.com

You'll find a range of information including webinars, suppliers of PPE, and guidelines for funeral professionals in responding to the virus.

CORONAVIRUS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Updated daily by 11 a.m. Last updated 11:00 a.m., April 30, 2020.

Laboratory-Confirmed Cases	Deaths	Completed Tests	Currently Hospitalized	Number of Counties
10,509	378	128,036	546	98

- Laboratory-Confirmed Cases reflect cases that were tested and returned positive, including the NC State Laboratory of Public Health and reporting hospital and commercial labs. All data are preliminary. Not all cases of COVID-19 are tested, so this does not represent the total number of people in North Carolina who have or had COVID-19. Deaths reflect deaths in persons with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 reported by local health departments to the NC Department of Health and Human Services.
- Completed tests reflect testing completed by the NC State Laboratory of Public Health and reporting hospital and commercial labs.
- Currently hospitalized reflect the number of patients with COVID-19 that are currently hospitalized in reporting hospitals.

