

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND PORT HEALTH SERVICES



PRESENTATION ON MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN REMAINS

JULY 2020

NDoH



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PRESENTATION OUTLINE



- Colours representations
- Purpose
- Definitions
- Directions on management of the deceased and disposal of human remains infected with COVID-19
- Guidelines on management of the deceased and disposal of human remains infected with COVID-19

COLOUR REPRESENTATIONS



- **Red** - New information
- **Black** – No changes

PURPOSE



- To share regulated methods of managing Human Remains.
- To provide clarity on specific questions raised by the funeral service industry.



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DEFINITIONS



- **Anteroom:** waiting room
- **Quarantine:** is a restriction on the movement of people and goods which is intended to prevent the spread of disease(Wikipedia)
- **Isolation:** separation from others
- **Decontamination:** is the process of cleansing an object or substance to remove contaminants such as micro-organisms or hazardous materials, including chemicals, radioactive substances, and infectious diseases.(Wikipedia)
- **Disinfection:** reduces the pathogen load but does not eliminate it



Directions on management of the deceased and disposal of human remains infected with COVID-19, 17 July 2020



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DIRECTIONS ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 HANDLING



- **The handling, transportation, importation, exportation and final disposal of COVID -19 mortal remains should be conducted only in accordance with chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the Human Remains Regulations R363 of 2013.**

DIRECTIONS ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 HANDLING: PARAGRAPH 7



Identification and establishment of mortuaries that will accommodate all COVID-19 mortal remains

- **Municipalities must identify suitably authorised mortuaries with valid certificates of competence, for the accommodation of all COVID-19 mortal remains and further management.**
- **All Provincial Departments of Health must identify suitable government mortuaries that will accommodate COVID-19 mortal remains and determine their capacity.**
- **Private and government mortuary operators must make available additional mortuary capacity and multi-transportation for mortal remains should the need arise.**
- **Municipalities and traditional authorities must identify and make land available for multi-burials should the need arise.**



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DIRECTIONS ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 HANDLING: DIRECTION 8



Handling of COVID-19 mortal remains: General

- Municipalities and private mortuary operators must ensure that the burial or cremation of COVID-19 mortal remains takes place in a suitably approved cemeteries or crematoria, respectively
- Where the carrying capacity of the cemetery may be exceeded as a result of COVID-19 deaths, the municipality or traditional authority may allow more than one human remain to a maximum of three human remains to be buried in one grave.

Handling of COVID-19 mortal remains in mortuaries or at funeral undertakers

- A body bag must be used for transferring the body from the mortuary to a private undertaker, to be exported for non-South Africans or to the family for final burial or cremation. Those handling the body at this point must use full PPE.



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DIRECTIONS ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 HANDLING



Measures when a person passes on at home

- In the event that a person dies at home of COVID-19, the person or persons attending to the mortal remains must not, at any stage, handle the mortal remains.
- Emergency Medical Services must be called immediately to declare the person dead, before removal by an undertaker

Prohibition of viewing and storage of COVID-19 body at home

- A funeral undertaker must deliver the mortal remains on the morning of burial and not the night before the burial and **must ensure that the remains are not touched.**



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DIRECTIONS ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 HANDLING



Disposal of COVID-19 Mortal Remains

- The COVID-19 mortal remains must not be kept for more than seven days at the mortuary.
- The relevant health authority may intervene where mortal remains are not claimed within seven days.
- Should the death rate appear to exceed the capacity of available space to keep mortal remains, the relevant health authority may intervene to facilitate multi-burials.
- Municipalities must ensure that a multi-burial is done in consideration of human dignity and the necessary controls must be put in place to ensure that mortal remains can be identified.



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Guidelines on management of the deceased and disposal of human remains infected with COVID-19



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 CONVEYANCE



Regulation 12: Conveyance of human remains

Requirements of human remains containment:

Polythene bag (**Recommended-transparent body bag**)

Container capable of being airtight

Sturdy non-transparent sealable coffin

Embalming

Treated wood sawdust or other absorbent material

Regulation 13: Requirements for transportation of human remains

Transportation may not endanger public health

Necessary steps must be taken to prevent leakages



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 CONVEYANCE IMPORTATION AND EXPORTATION



Exemptions:

- **Going out of RSA - The requirements do not apply if the health authority authorises in writing the waiver of application of regulation 13 (1)**
- **Coming into RSA – If a medical doctor confirms that the human remains do not pose any public health danger, requirement 13 (1) do not apply**

Regulation 14: Authorisation to import and export human remains (Status quo remains)

Documentation required for authorisation:

- **Importation non-infectious**
- **Importation infectious**
- **Exportation non-infectious**
- **Exportation infectious**

GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 CONVEYANCE IMPORTATION AND EXPORTATION



Documentation required for authorisation: Situations under which authorisations may be required (Regulations R363)

- **Transit through RSA**
- **Exhumation and exportation**
- **Exhumation and importation**
- **Unknown graves**
- **Exhumation and cremation**

Authorisation to import and export human remains

- **The application for permit also applies to persons who died in transit on a boat or aircraft**
- **The permit must accompany the human remains**



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 CONVEYANCE IMPORTATION AND EXPORTATION



Regulation 14: Authorisation to import and export human remains

- Authorisation is based on a number of relevant documents and certificates applicable to each case
- Import and export is issued by the Director General of Health and it is valid for 30 days from the date of issue
- Importation human remains without permit will be detained at a mortuary for 30 days and may be buried normally or by the state at the cost of the importer
- All applications for import and export of human remains must be sent to the Director General



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 CONVEYANCE



- Human remain considered to be infectious may not be transported by public transport, unless
- It is Properly packaged (in body bag, sturdy coffin, sawdust or disinfection)
- Medical practitioner declares that the conveyance will not cause a health hazard
- Only the medical practitioner/ attending forensic pathologist or medical practitioner may declare that a human remain is not infectious
- The declaration must accompany the HM at all times and produced on demand
- No person may open the container or damage any seal without an EHP's approval



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 HANDLING



- Family to be provided with mask and gloves for the viewing and should not touch the body with bare hands
- Washing or preparing of the mortal remains is allowed provided those carrying out the task wear PPE such as gloves, masks and waterproof coverall and all PPEs used must be disposed of immediately. However, the washing and preparing of the mortal remains by family members is not encouraged due to the health risks.
- No washing is allowed out of the mortuary or funeral undertaker's premises.
- and all PPEs used must be disposed of immediately.



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 HANDLING



- If the family wishes to dress the body, they may do so at the funeral undertaker's premises prior to the body being placed in the body bag and those carrying out the task wear PPE such as gloves, masks and waterproof coverall apron and all PPEs used must be disposed of immediately.
- The embalming is not recommended to avoid excessive manipulation of the body, however, if embalming is undertaken, the embalmer should wear full Personal Protective Equipment.
- After use, empty body bags should be cut and disposed of as health care risk waste.
- After use, the reusable empty heavy duty body bags must be treated in terms of existing procedures.



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 HANDLING



Environmental cleaning and control

- Surfaces and instruments should be made of materials that can be easily disinfected as prescribed in Regulations Relating to the Management of Human Remains, Regulation No. R. 363 of 22 May 2013 issued in terms of the National Health Act, 2003 (Act No. 61 of 2003).
- Environmental surfaces, where the body was prepared, should first be cleaned with soap and water, or a commercially prepared detergent solution; after cleaning, a disinfectant with a minimum concentration of 0.1% (1000 ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach), or 70% ethanol should be used to disinfect



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19

DISPOSAL



- **Cremation is highly recommended where a human remain has passed on due to COVID-19.**
- **Burial and or Cremation to comply to the By-Laws of the municipality where burial will take place (Human remains shall only be cremated in an authorized crematorium)**
- **Directions to be read in conjunction with regulations relating to the Management of Human Remains, Regulation 323 of 22 May 2013.**



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 DISPOSAL



- All persons handling COVID -19 mortal remains should wear suitable personal protective clothing at all times.
- All persons handling COVID-19 mortal remains should practice good personal hygiene such as washing hands with soap and water and using personal protective clothing.
- No person may at any given time make contact or touch the mortal remains.
- A body bag should be used for transferring the body to the mortuary and those handling the body at this point should use full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). *This applies for all movement*
- The outer surface of the body bag should be decontaminated immediately before the body bag leaves the ward or anteroom or point of collection/ House



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GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 DISPOSAL



- Burial services should be as short as possible **but may not exceed two hours to minimise possible exposure.**
- Mourners should observe **physical distancing during and after the burial services.**
- Only **close family members** should attend funeral services of persons that died of COVID-19 or of other infectious diseases.
- For the purposes of protecting the public health of the mourners at the burial service, COVID-19 patient should not attend the burial services irrespective of his or her relationship with the deceased
- Those tasked with placing the body in the grave, on the funeral pyre, etc. should wear gloves and wash hands with soap and water once the burial is complete.

GUIDELINES ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DECEASED AND DISPOSAL OF HUMAN REMAINS INFECTED WITH COVID-19 DISPOSAL



- **Machinery (for digging and closing of graves) can be used if deemed fit to prevent further spread of the virus and when hand tools are used during digging and closing the grave, they must be sanitised.**
- **People carrying the coffin must wear disposable hand gloves which must be disposed off properly.**

Burial of Non COVID-19 mortal remains

- **The mortuaries or the undertaker must not keep the mortal remains for more than ten days from the date of death.**
- **The non COVID-19 mortal remains must be buried or cremated within ten days from the date of death.**



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