

Cremation Explained

What is Cremation?

It is the process of reducing the body to ashes and bone fragments through the use of intense heat. The process usually takes two to four hours. Depending on the size of the body, the cremated remains will weigh three to nine pounds.

Is there a trend toward cremation?

The percentage of cremations in the United States is rapidly rising each year because of the considerable expense of traditional funerals, the diminishing space available for cemeteries, and increasing environmental concerns. In a number of areas in the nation, particularly on the West Coast and in Florida, cremation is the preferred method of disposition.

Over 90% of funeral consumer alliance members throughout the U.S. choose cremation because they seek a simple, dignified and affordable option. In England and Japan, where cemetery space is at a premium, the cremation rate is also close to 90%.

Is a casket required for cremation?

A casket is never required for cremation. However, most crematories do require that the body be enclosed in a rigid, combustible container. Under federal regulations, all mortuaries must make available an unfinished wooden box or similar inexpensive cremation container. Customers may make or furnish their own suitable container.

How much does cremation cost?

If a funeral home is used to transport the body, obtain permits, and file the death certificate, the fee for services may run anywhere from \$600-\$2,500. If a visitation or a funeral service is held before cremation, the charges will be higher.

People's Memorial Association and other FCA Affiliates offer significant savings to members through their contracted funeral homes. Families who care for their own dead can use crematories directly at charges from \$100 to \$400. Since 1984, all funeral homes are required to explain the firm's charges in detail before a funeral purchase. You also may ask for these prices over the phone.

Do I have to hire a Funeral Director?

Most states, including Washington permit religious groups or private citizens to obtain the necessary death certificate and permits for transit and disposition.

Is a funeral service necessary?

Although visitation and a funeral service with a body present may be held before cremation, many find it more helpful to have a memorial service without the body present. It is less costly and family and friends will appreciate an opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of a special person.

Can we keep the body at home?

It is increasingly common to keep the body at home for viewing, prior to delivery to the crematory.

Can we rent a casket?

In many parts of the country, mortuaries will rent an attractive casket to a family that wants to have the body present for visitation or for a funeral service preceding cremation. After the service, the body is transferred to an inexpensive cremation container. Significant savings may be realized by using a rental casket. There are also attractive, economical cremation caskets which may be purchased for situations where there is a visitation or viewing prior to cremation.

What can be done with the cremated remains?

Several choices exist: they can be placed in a niche in a columbarium, buried, scattered, or kept by the family. Cremated remains are sterile and pose no health hazard. Their disposition is, for the most part, not controlled, provided the landowner grants permission for burial or scattering.

A columbarium is an assembly of niches designed to hold containers of cremated remains. It is most often located in a mausoleum with a cemetery. Some churches provide niches within the church or as a part of a garden wall.

Earth burial can be in a cemetery, either in a regular grave or in a special urn garden. Many cemeteries will permit two or three containers in one adult-size plot. However, the family, if so inclined, can bury the cremains anywhere it wishes, with the property owner's permission.

Scattering cremains over some area that

had significance to the deceased has an appeal for many and is legal in most jurisdictions. Although there are commercial firms which will handle the cremated remains for a fee, most families prefer to do this themselves. Remains should be processed by the crematory to reduce all fragments to fine particles.

Must an urn be purchased?

Crematories typically return the cremated remains in a simple plastic container that is perfectly adequate for burial, shipping, or placing in a columbarium. The family may prefer a receptacle that is more aesthetic. Urns may be made by a family member or friend out of wood or pottery. Some use an Asian ginger jar or other container. If you are planning to inurn the cremains in a cemetery or columbarium, there may be restrictions on the size and material of the urn. Be sure to check in advance.

Are cremation societies the same as memorial societies?

The most important difference is that memorial societies, such as People's Memorial Association (often called funeral consumer alliances) are not-for-profit consumer groups which are democratically controlled, whereas direct cremation "societies" operate for profit. They masquerade as nonprofit by using "society" or "memorial" in their name and by charging a "membership" fee. In the Seattle area, American Memorial is a for-profit cremation company which cleverly represents that it "serves Peoples Memorial" and yet is not affiliated with

People's Memorial Association in any way. Cremation Society Northwest is another for-profit entity in the Seattle area which is owned by a large funeral home corporation. Neptune Society is also a nationwide for-profit corporation.

How do religious groups view cremation?

Most religions permit cremation. Since Vatican II Council in 1964, the Code of Canon Law allows Roman Catholics a choice between burial and cremation. The Greek and Jewish Orthodox faiths oppose cremation, as do some others.

Non-profit Memorial Associations in Washington State:

People's Memorial Association

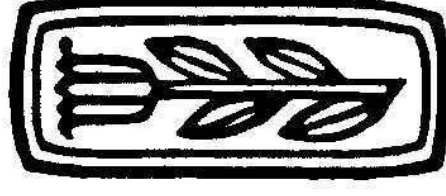
www.peoplesmemorial.org
206-325-0489

Spokane Memorial Association

www.funerals.org/spokane
509-924-8400

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Answers to
Commonly Asked
Questions



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