



Ohio Funeral Directors Association

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Recommendations of the Ohio Funeral Directors Association to Facilitate the Transfer of Deceased Patients from Nursing Homes, Long Term Care, and Hospice Facilities

It is vital that we work together to collaborate knowledge in order to help expedite the transfer of decedents into our care, so that families may proceed with making plans for their loved ones.

To help expedite the response by funeral directors, taking the following steps would be extremely beneficial:

1. If respiratory infection is the cause of death, please advise the funeral practitioner at the time of initial death notification. HIPAA Regulations allow for the release of information to the public, law enforcement, funeral directors and other governmental agencies. *
2. Funeral homes, like all health care providers and first responders are experiencing a shortage of PPE equipment. Therefore, only appropriate PPE for the circumstances will be used.
3. Please have any necessary documentation available at the transfer area to help the funeral practitioner avoid going into more than one area of your facility.
4. Please limit the amount of personnel escorting the funeral staff and decedent from the point of removal to the funeral vehicle.
5. If possible, facilities should identify an area for transferring the patient that minimizes exposure for the other patients, facility staff and funeral home staff.

We should all be familiar with the Ohio Department of Health guidelines concerning health care workers, nursing homes, and other essential services. The above is not meant to contradict any of those guidelines but serve as practical suggestions as we work together to serve the deceased and our communities during this difficult time.

On behalf of the members of OFDA, thank you for all that you and your staff do to provide care and comfort, while protecting all involved.

*Reference US 45 CFR 164.512 (g)(2)

Cleaning and Disinfection of Reusable Personal Protective Equipment

By Barb Garrison

While some personal protective equipment (PPE) used by funeral home staff is intended for single use only and should be disposed of as soon as it is removed (like gloves and shoe covers), embalmers also wear reusable PPE that must be cleaned and disinfected after each use. This includes:

- Safety glasses and goggles
- Face shields
- Reusable cloth gowns

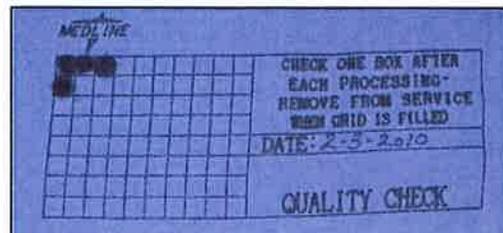
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), reusable eye and face protection should be cleaned and disinfected according to manufacturer's guidelines. So, before you toss that box that your safety glasses or face shield came in, read the care and use instructions. If you can't find the instructions, CDC recommends the following:

1. While wearing gloves, carefully wipe the *inside*, followed by the *outside* of the face shield or glasses/goggles using a clean cloth saturated with a detergent solution or cleaner wipe.
2. Carefully wipe the *outside* of the eyewear/face shield using a wipe or clean cloth saturated with EPA-registered hospital disinfectant solution.
3. Wipe the outside of the eyewear/ face shield with clean water or alcohol to remove residue.
4. Fully dry (air dry or use clean absorbent towels).
5. Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene.

As for reusable gowns, the CDC again points to manufacturers' recommendations. If these aren't available, normal laundering procedures should be sufficient. Per CDC:

The antimicrobial action of the laundering process results from a combination of mechanical, thermal, and chemical factors. Dilution and agitation in water remove substantial quantities of microorganisms. Soaps and detergents function to suspend soils and also exhibit some microbiocidal properties. Hot water provides an effective means of destroying microorganisms. A temperature of at least 160°F (71°C) for a minimum of 25 minutes is commonly recommended for hot-water washing. The use of chlorine bleach assures an extra margin of safety. Chlorine bleach is not, however, an appropriate laundry additive for all fabrics.

Remember that reusable cloth gowns can only be laundered a certain number of times before they lose their effectiveness. Most reusable gown manufacturers print a grid inside their gowns to help you keep track of how many times they have been laundered. You should use a permanent marker to fill in a square each time you launder a gown. When the grid is filled, throw the gown away or use it for other purposes besides embalming like applying cosmetics or casketing.



If you have questions about cleaning PPE that are not addressed in this article, please contact me at barb_garrison@sbcglobal.net.



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SPECIAL COVID-19 PLANNING BULLETIN, FROM PRESIDENT GARY BURR, CFSP

OFDA's Role

OFDA continues to maintain open dialogue with state officials (Ohio Department of Health, Ohio Board of Embalmers & Funeral Directors) and other affiliated organizations (NFDA, Ohio Mortuary Operations Response Team) about the role of funeral service as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 11, 2020, at the request of the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) and as a follow-up to the postmortem guidance released by the CDC in late-February, the agency released specific information about funeral and visitation services to help funeral directors safely care for people who have died of confirmed or suspected COVID-19.

The guidance offers us helpful, practical advice for how we can safely care for those we serve.

Specifically, the guidance tells us:

- We can still have funerals and visitations for those who die of confirmed or suspected COVID-19.
- We can safely embalm using proper personal protective equipment and are given information on how to sanitize and disinfect preparation rooms, transfer equipment and embalming instruments.
- Decedents can be buried or cremated, depending on the preference of the family.

From the very beginning of this situation, OFDA has been monitoring information from the CDC, Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies about the evolution of COVID-19 in the United States. As OFDA receives new information, we are sharing it with funeral directors.

Embalming & Preparation of the Body

According to the CDC, bodies of those who die of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 can safely be transported from the place in which the individual died and embalmed. The new guidance for funeral home staff emphasizes:

- Safe practices for transferring bodies in from the place at which they die to the funeral home. The best practice is to disinfect the nose and mouth of the deceased at the location of death, and additionally, or at least, cover the nose and mouth of the deceased with face mask, a damp washcloth or webrol towel to reduce aerosolized droplets from contaminating transfer personnel and equipment.
- The use of personal protective equipment – such as gloves, gowns, masks and respirators – for transfers and embalming, depending on the circumstances we expect to encounter.
- NFDA has advised that it's always better to don more PPE and be safe than sorry
- Thorough cleaning – and the kinds of products we should use to – disinfect contaminated surfaces.

- The guidance also tells us how we can work with families and religious leaders in situations where washing the body or shrouding are important religious or cultural practices.
- Whenever possible, we want to enable families to participate in the rituals that are most important to them; however, we also have a duty to reduce their exposure to COVID-19 as much as possible.
- At a minimum, families should wear disposable gloves, but more personal protective equipment may be required.

Availability of PPE

There has been concern expressed about the availability of personal protective equipment. OFDA is aware this may be a challenge and is in touch with companies who supply PPE, as well as contacting government officials about ensuring funeral home staff are on the priority list for receiving critical supplies.

Cremation or Burial

At this time, the CDC states that decedents with COVID-19 may be buried or cremated according to the family's preferences. However, they also note that we should check with our local health officials to ensure that there are no local requirements that may impact that choice for individuals who died from COVID-19.

Visitations and Funerals

At this time, CDC tells us that there is 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.

However, the CDC also notes that families should consider not touching the body of someone who has died of COVID-19.

On March 12, 2020 ODH Director Amy Acton issued an order preventing mass gatherings to prevent the spread of COVID-19, exempting religious gatherings, weddings, funerals and expression of First Amendment protected speech gatherings.

As an extra layer of precaution for your staff and those you serve, the OFDA is encouraging you to:

- Remind families about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, such as by staying home if you are sick, washing your hands, covering coughs and sneezes, being mindful of social distancing and close personal contact, which includes the avoidance of hugging and hand shaking.
- Consider additional space between seating for funeral service attendees.
- Keep soap dispensers filled in public (and employee) restrooms and encourage hand washing.
- Offer alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol to guests (and employees).
- Have extra tissues on hand.
- If, for some reason, an individual is unable to attend a service, discuss options with the family such as:
 - Whether the service could be recorded or streamed using either a webcasting service or Facebook Live.
 - Whether we can postpone the service.
 - Whether the family can hold a memorial gathering – either in addition to or in lieu of a funeral service – at a later date.

As a business that is open to the public, be vigilant about cleaning, especially after services or arrangement conferences. The CDC has offered guidance for businesses on this topic.

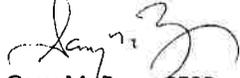
General: Keeping Staff and the Public Safe

As funeral professionals, we care deeply about the health and safety of our staff and those we are privileged to serve. As a funeral homeowner/manager it is your responsibility to protect the health and safety of your staff. OFDA is carefully reviewing the CDC guidance, as well as information from OSHA and from the Department of Labor (as it pertains to sick leave). OFDA and NFDA has provided funeral homes with a great amount of information and is encouraging you to prepare a plan of action for your business. They also urge you to discuss this plan with all staff and update them regularly as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve.

Click on the **COVID-19 Resources** banner on our homepage OFDAonline.org for a collection of pertinent articles and links.

And finally, continue to be the calm, reassuring voice of reason within your community. Your community looks to you for guidance and stability in their time of need. OFDA will be here to support you as this situation unfolds.

All my best to you,



Gary M. Burr, CFSP
President