

# Precautions for Handling Mortal Remains

The handling, transportation, importation, exportation and final disposal of COVID-19 mortal remains should be conducted only in accordance with the Human Remains Regulations.

**Covid-19**

## Handling of COVID-19 mortal remains in mortuaries and funeral undertakers

The act of moving a recently deceased patient onto a trolley for transportation might expel small amounts of air from the lungs and thereby present a risk, therefore, the following measures should be taken:

- A body bag should be used for transferring the body to the mortuary.
- The outer surface of the body bag should be decontaminated immediately before transportation.
- The trolley carrying the body must be disinfected.
- The staff members must remove their PPE before leaving the area.
- Washing or preparing of the mortal remains is allowed provided the correct PPE such as gloves, masks and waterproof coverall is used and all PPE is disposed of immediately. However, this procedure is not encouraged for family members due to the health risks.
- If a post mortem is required, safe working techniques should be used and full PPE should be worn.
- The embalming of COVID-19 human remains should not pose a risk; however, the embalmer should wear full PPE.
- After use, empty body bags should be cut and disposed of as healthcare risk waste.
- After use, the reusable empty heavy duty body bags must be treated in terms of existing procedures.

## All personnel handling COVID-19 mortal remains should:

- 1 Wear suitable personal protective clothing.
- 2 Practice good hand hygiene such as washing hands with soap and water or hand sanitise with 70% alcohol based sanitiser.
- 3 Not make contact with, or touch, the mortal remains without wearing the appropriate PPE.
- 4 Should be encouraged to be vaccinated.

## Environmental Cleaning and Control

- The mortuary must be kept clean and properly ventilated and illuminated at all times.
- Surfaces and instruments should be made of materials that can be easily disinfected as prescribed in the Human Remains Regulations.
- 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.

Those tasked with placing the body in the grave, on the funeral pyre, etc. should wear disposal gloves, dispose of it properly; and wash hands with soap and water once the burial is complete.

## Disposal of mortal remains Burial or cremation

COVID-19 Workplace Preparedness & Prevention  
HEALTHY, SAFE & SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACES

Workplace Hotline: 0800 2121 75

Occupational Health Surveillance System [OHSS]

General queries for data submission: 0723215503 | 0713981169 | OHSWorkplace@nioh.ac.za

OPERATING HOURS for the OHSS hotline: Mon-Fri: 08h00 - 17h00, Weekends and public holidays: Closed

www.nioh.ac.za

info@nioh.ac.za

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