

CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

BURIAL CAPACITY

1 What burial capacity does the City have at present?

The City of Cape Town has 40 public cemeteries, of which only 16 cemeteries are still actively used for burials. Out of these active cemeteries many have reached full capacity and only accommodate burials in private family graves as second on-top burials. There are however 5 cemeteries with longer term burial opportunities which at the current burial demand are projected to be sufficient for the next 5 years.

MASS BURIALS AND GRAVES

2 Has the City planned for the prospect of mass burials? What is the reasoning behind this?

The City can confirm that it has adequate space to accommodate the increase in burial demand. A Fatalities Management Plan is in place and spare burial blocks are available in specified cemeteries, for the possibility of a need to accommodate mass burials, as required by National Government.

Whilst the demand for burial and cremation of COVID-19 victims is still manageable, the City is preparing individual graves to ensure a dignified service for families as fatalities increase. Mass burials will only be used as a last resort, and the City is doing everything possible to avoid this.

3 Which cemeteries have been identified for mass graves and what criteria was used to in identifying these sites?

Atlantis, Welmoed, Klip, Maitland and Wallacedene cemeteries have been assessed and found to have the largest reserves in burial blocks available for a high volume of burials to take place simultaneously.

OUR FACILITIES

4 Have there been any cemeteries or crematoria closed due to staff testing positive for COVID-19?

No City owned or managed facilities to date.

BURIAL REGULATIONS

5 How many people are allowed to be at the grave site during a burial?

Undertakers must ensure that the family adheres to the restriction of a maximum of 50 people permitted to attend each burial. This total includes the priest, family members, undertaker staff and guests. It is recommended that if required, a register of mourners leaving the church and traveling to the cemetery be taken and used to manage access control on arrival at the cemetery.

6 Whose responsibility is it to provide face masks and hand sanitizers to families at burials?

Regrettably, the City cannot provide hand sanitiser, soap, water or masks for the public while at cemeteries. It is strongly recommended that undertakers make provision for their clients and encourage hand sanitising as frequently as possible.

All mourners should also be reminded to observe the 1m social distancing rule between each other while at the graveside. Hand shaking, hugging and kissing should also be avoided.

7 How long are you allowed to have a burial ceremony at the grave site?

Only 30 minutes is allowed in the cemetery for each burial.

8 Are people allowed to attend the burial of a person that died of COVID-19?

Yes. With a restriction of a maximum of 50 people permitted to attend each burial. Funeral attendees are also reminded to maintain social distancing and wear a face mask at all times.

9 Can I get infected if I touch someone who died from COVID-19 after they pass away?

National COVID-19 Health Regulations explicitly state that no touching or kissing of the body is allowed, except for preparation of the body. The person who does this must wear the required Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and comply with all health and safety regulations.

CREMATION

10 If cemeteries bookings become full, will the only option available be cremation?

The City can confirm that it has adequate space to accommodate the increase in burial demand. However, statistics show that the preferred day for burials is currently on Saturdays. The City requests stakeholders to encourage clients to consider burials on weekdays, at reduced tariffs, so to limit the safety risks and possible congestion at the cemeteries. As the number of burials increase over time, it may become necessary for the City to put measures in place for an even spread of burial bookings across other days in the week.

The City also encourages people to consider cremation, especially where cultural and religious beliefs do not preclude it. Burial is generally more expensive and there is often a lot of pressure placed on the bereaved to provide expensive coffins and memorials afterwards. Cremation is a less expensive alternative and ashes can be scattered or buried in a family grave at a fraction of the cost.

11 What infrastructure does the municipality have in place to accommodate cremations?

The City owns Maitland Crematorium, while there are several privately owned crematoriums within the Western Cape Province.

The Durbanville Private Crematorium is another facility within Cape Town. It is not currently used at full capacity.

There are 3 other crematoriums within the Western Cape Province in George, Paarl and Worcester, all of which are privately owned.

MEMORIAL WORK

12 Is memorial work installation allowed under Level 3 restrictions?

Yes, memorial work is being allowed by companies who have the required government approvals to be operating under Alert Level 3 Lockdown. Unfortunately, no unveiling of memorial work ceremonies is allowed during this period.



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