

# DIVISION OF CEMETERIES

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TO: ALL REGULATED CEMETERIES

FROM: NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, DIVISION OF CEMETERIES

RE: NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) AND SAFE HANDLING OF REMAINS

DATE: MARCH 10, 2020

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The Department of State, Division of Cemeteries, is working with the New York State Department of Health to obtain guidance for the safe handling of remains at regulated cemeteries (including crematories) in cases where the deceased may have been infected by the novel coronavirus.

At present, cemeteries (including crematories) should be mindful of the following guidance for safe handling of infectious remains, provided as part of the Crematory Operator Training Program:

#### Infectious Diseases

The following procedures should be followed when handling human remains where the cause of death may be attributed to infectious or contagious disease, though we should treat all human remains as if they have infectious or contagious diseases:

- Handle body fluids so as to minimize exposure of personnel to sprays of droplets.
- Use disposable gloves, aprons, and other protective clothing to minimize direct skin contact with infectious fluids.
- Clean work surfaces thoroughly when activities are completed using household bleach diluted 1:10 with water.
- Perform the cremation as soon as possible.

These procedures would apply to handling of any potentially infectious remains, not just COVID-19. We will keep you informed of any necessary updates to this guidance specific to COVID-19.

The United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has provided additional guidance for deathcare workers and employees. That guidance can be found at: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html#deathcare>