

COVID-19 Handling of a Deceased Body





This is a time of uncertainty for us all, and it is increasingly likely that we will start having to support families who are facing the untimely loss of a loved one due to COVID-19. In so doing, this will become an important time for us to step forward.

The Nova Scotia Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors is providing this information to assist all licensees in the handling of human remains during the Covid-19 Pandemic. This information is intended to be used as a guideline.

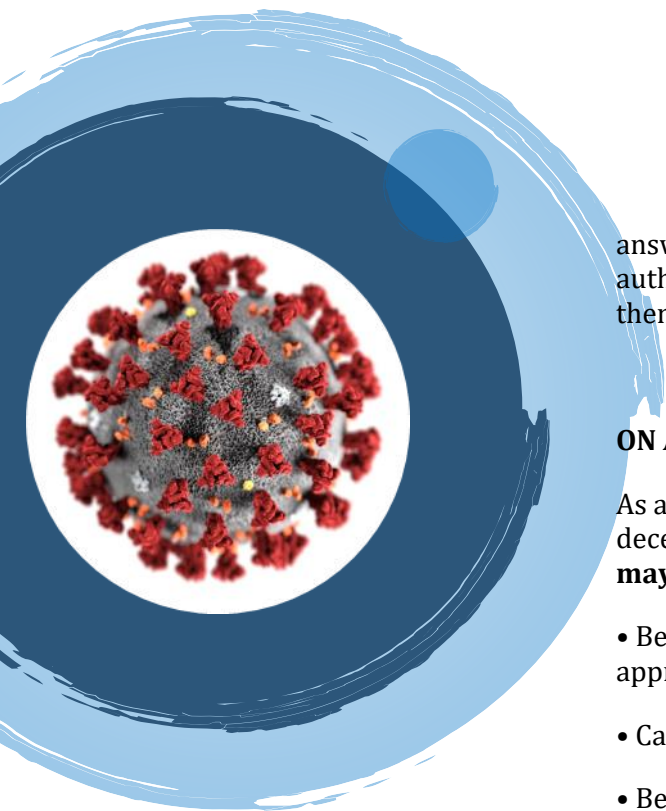
COVID-19 spreads mainly through close contact, within 6 feet (2 metres) of a person who is currently infected. The virus is transmitted primarily through droplet spray produced when the infected person coughs or sneezes.

When you're asked to provide a removal, the infectious status of the deceased person and others at the location (*reference to Coronavirus*) should be given by the caller or client, if this information is not forthcoming then you should ask:

- "Has the person who has died, anyone present or any of their friends and family recently had contact with anybody affected by the Coronavirus?" If the answer is "yes" then ask - "Please could you make sure only one person is present to meet our colleagues when they arrive to collect the deceased person?"
- "Have you or the deceased person been experiencing any of the following symptoms, fever, cough or flu like symptoms?" If the

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answer is “yes” then ask - “Have you been in touch with health authorities? If “yes” ask what were they told? If “no” then encourage them to do so.

ON ARRIVAL AT THE LOCATION OF THE REMOVAL:

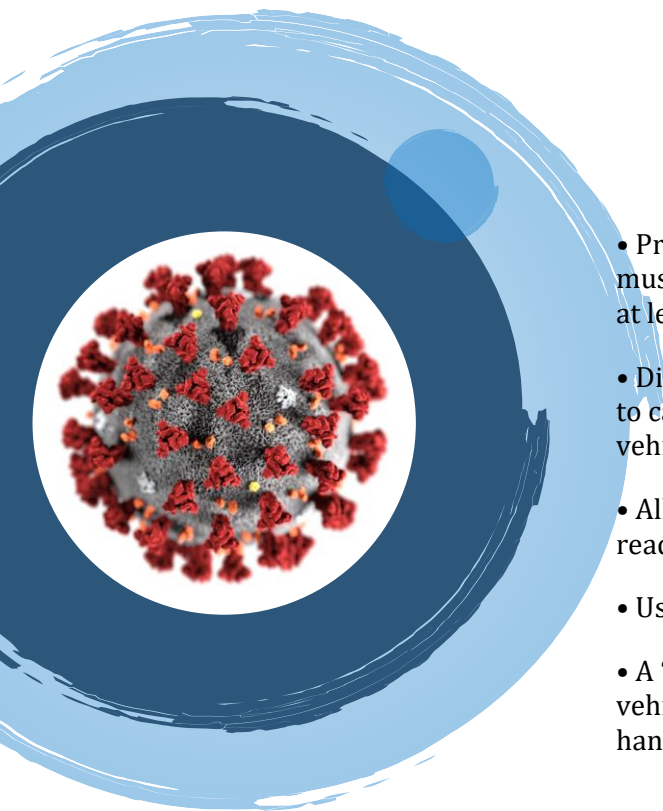
As a member of the transfer team attending to the removal of a deceased person when there is reason to believe that Coronavirus **may be** present you should take the following actions –

- Before entering the property ensure you are wearing the appropriate **personal protective equipment (PPE)**.
- Carry out a dynamic risk assessment.
- Before you move the body place a mask or covering over the mouth and nose of the deceased person. This will reduce the risk of air expelled from the lungs when moving the body.
- Avoid touching surfaces (*wherever possible*) in and around the property.
- Do not touch your own face prior to removing PPE and clean your hands either with alcohol hand-sanitizing gel or washing them in warm water with soap for at least 2 minutes.
- Ensure contact with other people present (ie: family, etc) is kept to a minimum.
- As soon as you remove any PPE place it in a clinical waste bag and seal it as soon as reasonably possible.
- Ensure correct PPE is worn when transferring the deceased person from the transfer vehicle to the preparation facility.

ON ARRIVAL AT THE PREPARATION FACILITY OR FUNERAL HOME:

Following the removal, the following procedures should be followed at the resting destination for deceased:

- Ensure that the chain of custody is completed and includes (in bold capital letters) that the deceased person may have Coronavirus. Mark the body bag/removal sheet in **red** as a potentially Coronavirus infected case and the date of removal.



- Prior to removing your PPE, the outer surface of the body bag must be decontaminated with antibacterial wipes. This may require at least two individuals to carry out this task.
- Disinfect any aid to manual handling (trolley/stretchers etc.) used to carry the body prior to being loaded back onto the removal vehicle.
- All PPE should be placed in clinical waste bags which are sealed ready for disposal.
- Used body bags must be disposed of as clinical waste.
- A “deep clean” of the removal vehicle should be completed and the vehicle restocked with PPE and other consumables (alcohol wipes, hand sanitizer, etc.) as required.

EMBALMING

According to the CDC, bodies of those who die of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 can safely be transported and embalmed. There does not appear to be any data that supports this virus behaves differently than other similar respiratory viruses and therefore does not present unique risks when handling a deceased body.

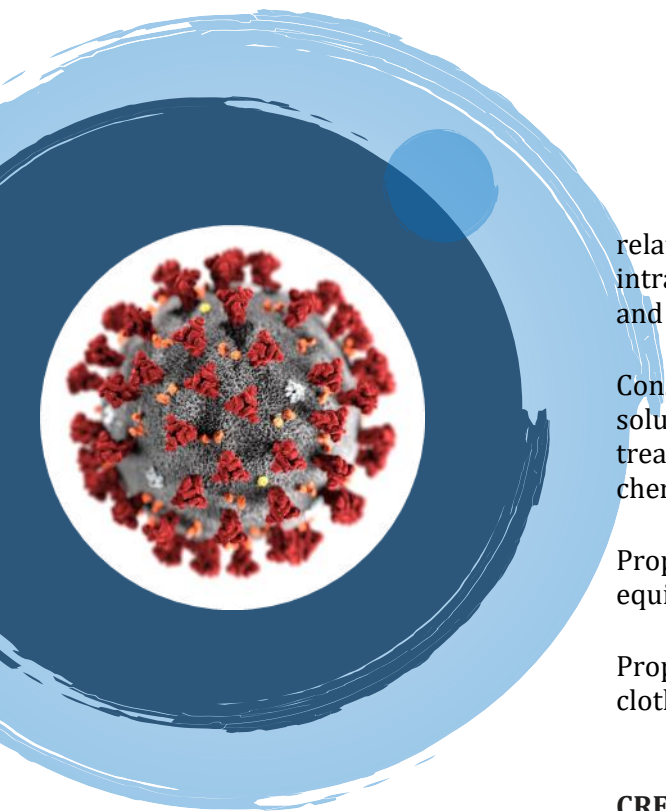
Ensure that the preparation room is well ventilated during the embalming procedure.

Limit preparation room exposure to authorized personnel only during embalming and post-embalming disinfection.

Make certain that the bodies are being handled with standard universal precautions and PPE.

Perform primary disinfection of the deceased patient, including the palms of the hands and nail beds, allowing disinfectant chemicals to sit on the body for at least 10 minutes. Wash the body thoroughly with germicidal soap, pre-embalming. Properly disinfect the eyes, oral and nasal cavities with a disinfectant chemical prior to setting features. It may also be advisable to place disinfectant (ie: Dispray/Santifactant) saturated cotton in the nasal and throat.

Select arterial and cavity chemicals that will meet the preservative demand for each individual deceased considering all factors



relating to the cause and manner of death, predisposing conditions, intravascular and extravascular variables, service arrangements and scheduling final disposition.

Consider adding a bottle of disinfectant chemical to the embalming solution. After arterial injection, thoroughly aspirate and chemically treat the thoracic and abdominal cavities with two bottles of cavity chemical.

Properly disinfect non-porous surfaces, surgical instruments and equipment following embalming.

Properly disinfect personal effects and disinfect or dispose of clothing and shrouds.

CREMATION

The presence of the virus should not be an issue for cremation. Standard PPE and universal precautions should be used in the handling of the body at crematoriums.

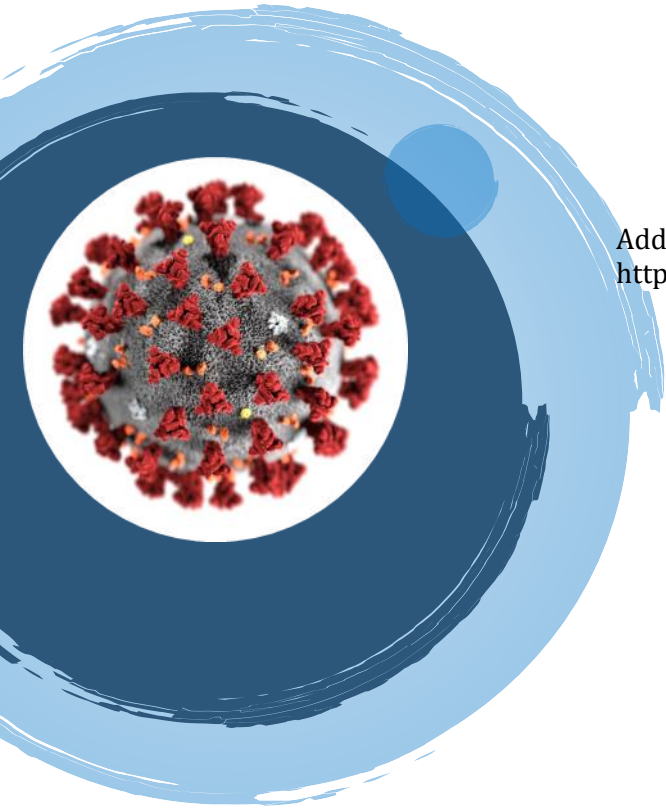
Additional processes or precautions for burial should not be necessary as there is no data to support the virus poses a risk to the environment.

Disinfecting contaminated surfaces using products with a recognized disinfectant for the preparation room is of utmost importance.

It is always better to don more PPE and be safe than sorry. All PPE should be taken off and disposed of properly.

HANDLING OF THE BODY FOR RELIGIOUS NEEDS

The guidance also notes that if “washing the body or shrouding are important religious or cultural practices, families are encouraged to work with their community cultural and religious leaders and funeral home staff on how to reduce their exposure as much as possible. At a minimum, people conducting these activities should wear disposable gloves. If splashing of fluids is expected, additional personal protective equipment (PPE) may be required (such as disposable gown, face shield or goggles and facemask).”



Additional guidance on PPE can be found on the CDC website:
<https://www.cdc.gov/>

The information provided was extracted or contributed by:
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