



March 23, 2020

Via Email

Governor Phil Murphy
State of New Jersey
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625

Re: Request for Funeral Industry Considerations During COVID-19 State of Emergency

Dear Governor Murphy:

The New Jersey State Funeral Directors Association, comprised of 915 licensees and over 600 funeral homes along with the Garden State Funeral Directors Association remain committed to working with the Governor's Office and the State of New Jersey to minimize exposure to COVID-19 while ensuring human remains are identified, transported, prepared and disposed of in a timely and seamless fashion.

It is imperative that our operations continue without incident in order to avoid adding pressure to the State's medicolegal system as it begins to experience surges in deaths related to COVID-19.

To that end, we request your consideration for the funeral industry to operate unimpeded during this public health emergency, provided funeral homes:

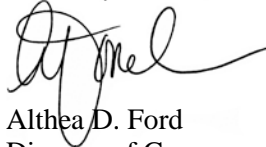
- Comply with Executive Order No. 107 (and any subsequent orders). Specifically, we have directed all of our members for the limited engagement of only immediate next of kin (inclusive of funeral home personnel) in order to procure the necessary disposition authorizations, privately identify, participate in a non-public viewing and/or abbreviated memorialization and witness the final disposition (subject to the discretion or prohibition of the individual cemetery or crematory). Such directives will continue to be emphasized in our member communications. We believe that such an accommodation is comparable to the current accommodation made for faith communities to utilize a limited number of individuals at their facilities in order to facilitate the live streaming of religious services and is compliant with OEM Administrative Order #2020-4.
- Adhere to social distance guidelines by promoting a six-foot minimum distance between individuals and providing regular access to hand-washing facilities and appropriate hand sanitizer to the immediate next of kin that engage our industries in the event of a death.
- Implement procedures to secure the proper authorizations by the individual(s) with the right to control the funeral and disposition of the decedent when these individuals are under quarantine.
 - We are preparing to seek temporary relief from the obligation of licensed practitioners of mortuary science meeting in person with legal next of kin to obtain necessary authorizations and original signatures
- Utilize creative technology to engage funeral attendees remotely, when possible.
- Delay all public events until the State of Emergency is lifted.

Additionally, we reiterate previous communications with your office requesting an explicit designation of funeral directors, funeral homes, cemeteries and crematories as essential services as it pertains to the ability to operate during a public health emergency. This designation will ensure that we are able to obtain the necessary personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, shoe covers, gowns) through the Office of Emergency Management and other official channels; access other essential goods and services; and travel unimpeded in order to conduct the transport, handling, preparation and disposal of dead human remains.

With an average of 6,300 deaths per month in the State, our entities must be able to conduct their work without delay and this designation will help to avoid any unintended consequence on the State's ability to dispose of its dead in a timely manner under tightened restrictions and the potential for a significant increase in the number of dead.

Please feel free to contact me directly via cell at (908) 907-8690.

Sincerely,



Althea D. Ford
Director of Government Relations

cc: Derrick Green, Senior Advisor for Diversity and Urban Affairs, Office of the Governor
Michael DeLamater, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of the Governor
Judy Welshons, Executive Director, New Jersey Cemetery Association
Ryan M. Buckland, President, Garden State Funeral Directors Association
George R. Kelder Jr., CFSP, CEO/Executive Director, NJSFDA
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Christina Zuk, Princeton Public Affairs Group