

Illinois Cremation Centers

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# Cremation Facts Booklet

This booklet is offered as an informational resource for families who have chosen cremation.

The following information is furnished to enable you to more fully understand some of the terminology and procedures involved in the cremation process:

#### DEFINITIONS

**CREMATION** -the irreversible process of reducing human remains to bone fragments through extreme heat and evaporation.

**CREMATED REMAINS** -the bone fragments remaining after the cremation process. (technically, these fragments are not "ashes.")

**CREMATORY/CREMATORIUM** -the facility which houses the cremation chamber.

**CREMATION CHAMBER** -the mechanical device used to perform the actual cremation process.

**CREMATION CONTAINER** -the container required to transport the human remains to the crematory. It could be the casket used at the funeral or a special rigid, leakproof, combustible box designed for cremation. The cremation container will be destroyed during the cremation process.

**FINAL DISPOSITION** -the final resting place for the cremated remains.

**HUMAN REMAINS** -the body of the deceased.

**INURNMENT** -(1) placing the cremated remains in an urn or other container in preparation for final disposition; (2) placing the urn/container in its final resting place.

**PULVERIZATION PROCESS** -the reduction of the cremated remains to an unidentifiable consistency to facilitate inurnment and/or to make the cremated remains acceptable for scattering. Depending on the pulverization device used, very small bone fragments may or may not remain after processing.

#### THE CREMATION PROCESS

Depending on local laws, there may be a waiting period of up to 48 hours from the time of death before the human remains may be cremated.

Before cremation, mechanical devices such as pacemakers must be removed because they may explode during the cremation process, causing extensive damage to the integrity of the human remains and to the cremation chamber.

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To begin the cremation process, the human remains, and the cremation container are placed in the cremation chamber. Open flames raise the temperature to 1600°-2000 ° Fahrenheit for a period of approximately two to three hours. The time varies with each human remains.

When the cremation is performed in a chamber which utilizes a secondary afterburner chamber, the partially cremated remains are moved into this secondary chamber for completion of the cremation process. In cremation chambers without a secondary chamber, the partially cremated remains may be repositioned to facilitate completion of the cremation process.

To reposition the human remains or to remove the cremated remains from the cremation chamber, a broad hoe-like instrument is used. Every effort is made by the operator to completely remove every particle from the chamber floor. However, tiny particles may remain in the cremation chamber and become commingled with particles of another cremation.

Occasionally, excess body fluids escape from the cremation chamber during processing, fluids which otherwise would have evaporated during the cremation process. These body fluids would not have become part of the cremated remains had they remained in the cremation chamber.

After the cremation process is complete, the cremated remains are removed from the cremation chamber and placed in a tray for cooling. They are then processed to their final reduced consistency. The processed cremated remains are placed into an urn or some other type of container, according to the wishes of the family. Most cremated remains weigh between 4 to 8 pounds (about 220 cubic inches), depending on the bone structure of the human remains.

Metal objects, such as jewelry and dental gold, may break down into small pieces during the cremation process. These small pieces, along with larger pieces of metal (e.g., hinges, screws, and prostheses), may be removed from the cremated remains using a magnet or some other means, then disposed of according to local laws and company policy.

The family chooses the final disposition of the cremated remains. Pending this decision, your funeral professional will hold the cremated remains for a very limited, specified time. The family may select inurnment in a permanent location such as a mausoleum/columbarium niche, cemetery plot (many cemeteries allow urns to be buried if the same plot as a previously-interred casket or other urn), or other special location of the family's choosing. Alternatively, the remains may be scattered in a cemetery scattering garden, at sea, or in some other location, so long as it is in accordance with local laws. However, the decision to scatter should be chosen carefully in that it is irreversible.

Any further questions regarding the cremation process should be addressed to the funeral professional who assisted you in making these arrangements.