

GUIDANCE DISPOSAL OF ASHES

Purpose

To provide funeral firms with a consistent approach and guidelines ('best practice') for the disposal of cremated remains where ownership is either not known or non traceable. Whilst this situation has to be addressed, due to the sensitivity of the issue it is imperative that funeral firms take all reasonable steps to establish ownership prior to disposal.

Action to be taken Prior to Scattering

The funeral firm should satisfy itself that all reasonable efforts have been made to identify and trace the legal owner of the cremated remains.

- All company records should be researched and reviewed in an attempt to establish ownership.
- Every reasonable attempt should be made to contact the family, ie the last known address of the deceased or signatory of the cremation papers should be visited if practicable.
- The signatory/person who arranged the funeral (if known) should be advised in writing via Royal Mail Recorded Delivery that, unless instructions are given to the funeral firm within twenty-eight days, the cremated remains will be scattered at the firm's discretion or returned to the nearest crematorium.
- An appropriately worded advertisement should be placed in local newspapers giving twenty-eight days' notice of scattering.

Scattering – The Options

- The ashes must have been in the funeral firm's possession for a **minimum of five years**, with all previous attempts of repatriation having proved unsuccessful.
- Return the ashes to the local crematorium for scattering in the garden of remembrance (if possible) or, alternatively, within curtilage of the funeral home, if appropriate.
- Purchase a single plot in the local cemetery/churchyard for interment.
- Scatter the ashes at local beauty spot, with landowner's permission.
- The funeral firm should seriously consider whether or not to achieve positive PR by publicising any subsequent 'scattering event' and involving local media.

Overview

- In order to avoid a recurrence of untraceable ownership of cremated remains it is essential that, for the future, comprehensive documentation is maintained, clearly stating details of ownership and giving instructions for disposal/retention.
- Always obtain a signature for the instructions.

Whilst the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) recommends that these guidelines be followed, it cannot take responsibility in the event of any action being brought against a member company or individual.