



Dear Colleagues,

ICCM Response to Covid-19 and ongoing support to members

We are in an unprecedented and fast-changing situation, with advice from Government appearing daily. We will continue to provide updates via our website and e-newsletters as soon as possible after receiving such advice.

We would also like to reiterate that we are here to support you with both technical and emotional guidance – these are tough times for all of us and I'm sure we are all worried about our families and friends, as well as ourselves, whilst wishing to continue providing the best service we can to bereaved families.

Government Guidance

The Government has now introduced stricter measures on social distancing, and things are likely to get even stricter in the coming days and weeks. If you haven't already, you must consider how you are going to manage funerals based on the new measures. The major organisations representing funeral directors and cemeteries and crematoria are currently advocating a risk based approach taking into account Government guidance. Examples of what burial and cremation authorities are putting in place can be found on the ICCM website at <https://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/covid-19-examples-from-cemeteries-and-crematoria/>.

Cremator Operating

In coming weeks it is possible that staff may need to go into self-isolation and therefore not be able to attend work. This could result in a reduced number of qualified cremator operators.

Non-qualified cremator operators can operate cremators under the supervision of a qualified operator. It is possible for a qualified operator to train staff through mentoring, and to assist with this the ICCM can help to get people through their BTEC accredited Cremator Technicians Training Scheme qualification without compromising the quality of the qualification. Workbooks can be emailed immediately to new operators signing up to the scheme, and can be emailed back to the National Office for immediate marking once the assignments have been completed. Once the mentor feels the operator is ready to take their practical exam, an examiner can attend the site within days, subject to suitable precautions to protect health and safety being agreed. A copy of the CTTS Handbook explaining the qualification and containing an application form can be found at https://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/wp-content/library/iccm_CTTS%20Handbook%20September%202016.pdf.pdf

For further information please contact ICCM Administration Officer, Julie Callender, at jcalldener@institutecemandcrem.com or ring 020 8989 4661.

For technical advice on cremating issues please contact ICCM Technical and Member Services Officer, Mathew Crawley, at mcrawley@institutecemandcrem.com or ring 07581006035.

Burials and Groundwater

Many authorities may be considering looking for land for excess burials should the situation demand. It is vital that Environment Agency advice is taken into account when considering such sites:

Arrangements for human burials in emergencies

During an emergency situation, such as a health epidemic or disaster, it's a priority to keep sources of drinking water safe from contamination.

Emergency planners should always try to use alternatives to burial for body disposal, such as cremation. Plans for using existing cemeteries, or land reserved for new cemeteries, must not affect the quality or safety of groundwater or any other water supplies.

Any temporary morgue or mortuary must be able to contain bodily fluids, microbes, substances and chemicals. This may involve sealing drains for safe collection of liquids for later removal by a specialist contractor.

During such emergency situations, if groundwater is at risk, then the minimum groundwater protection requirement of being outside an SPZ1 may be extended to SPZ2.

Please note - this means that restrictions for appropriate safe site selection during a pandemic are **greater** than in usual circumstances.

It is our collective responsibility to protect valuable drinking water stocks, so please pay heed to the Environment Agency advice to ensure that sources remain safe.

If you have not already conducted a risk assessment for your burial sites you are urged to do so as now. Guidance on this legal requirement can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cemeteries-and-burials-groundwater-risk-assessments>.

Please continue to follow Government guidance and stay safe.