

## Decedent Storage Guidance for Local Death Care



Department of Commerce

Division of Real Estate & Professional Licensing



Funeral directors, coroners, and other death-care workers are a critical component in Ohio's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Caring for decedents requires the use of established partnerships and a focused plan. The guidance below is designed to assist in that care should casualties place strain upon local storage capacity.

A two-phased mass fatality plan has been developed by the Ohio Department of Health in collaboration with members of the State Mass Fatality Workgroup. Phase 1 expands local decedent storage capacity at the local level by providing cooling units. Phase 2 prepares for a worst-case scenario in which all storage has been exhausted and decedent remains must be stored in specialized facilities until appropriate burials or cremations can be arranged. Early during this pandemic, the governor's office announced the grouping of Ohio's regions into three zones. The state of Ohio mass fatality workgroup has placed refrigerated trailers in each zone to support fatality management. Counties corresponding to the three zones are illustrated below:

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Zone 1



Zone 2



Zone 3



### Local Storage Assessment

Death-care workers are advised to frequently assess their own resources as well as collaborate with local partners on local storage capacities. The link below has been developed to help these workers navigate decision-making. Local partnerships should always be explored prior to making formal requests for assistance to local emergency management agencies (EMAs). To locate your local EMA's contact information, please visit [https://webeoctraining.dps.ohio.gov/ohiocountyEMADirectorList/countyemalist\\_web.aspx](https://webeoctraining.dps.ohio.gov/ohiocountyEMADirectorList/countyemalist_web.aspx).

## **Phase 1**

### **Local EMA Engagement**

In the event all local decedent storage is exhausted, the death-care stakeholder should contact the local emergency management agency, which will make a request for the use of the available storage units.

Death-care workers should be ready to provide their local EMA the following information:

- Funeral home name.
- Number of decedents requiring storage.
- Contact person.
- Whether the need for storage is immediate, or the best time to transfer the remains.

Death-care workers are advised to ensure the following:

- No personal effects accompany the decedent(s).
- Decedent(s) are properly tagged with the following information:
  - Last name, first name, middle initial.
  - Associated funeral home name.
  - Funeral home contact information.
  - Decedent(s) date of birth and date of death.
  - Last four digits of decedent's Social Security number.
- Each decedent is in a body bag.
  - If body bags are needed, inform your local EMA.
- All decedents are embalmed.

### **Zone Coordination**

Local EMAs have been provided contact information for each zone and will coordinate requests for death-care storage and confirm availability with the state emergency operations center (EOC).

### **Decedent Pickup**

When final disposition (burial or cremation) is arranged, coordination for pickup of the decedent will be made between the local death-care stakeholder and staff of the storage facility.

## **Phase 2**

### **Coordination**

If there is no availability in storage facilities, a zone attentive care site may be employed to accommodate decedents. Attentive care sites are climate-controlled facilities identified for the dignified storage of remains during a mass fatality incident. Decedents will be temporarily stored in these facilities in a worst-case surge scenario until burial or cremation can take place. Local EMAs have been provided guidance on the process for requesting zone attentive care site activation. Your local EMA will provide you an estimated time for accommodating storage, appropriate points of contact, and transportation procedures.

### **Decedent Transport**

The local death-care worker shall inform the decedents' families of the need to store decedents in the zone attentive care sites.

Funeral directors are advised to prepare a chain of custody for the transfer and to have the following information ready for intake.

- Decedent's last name, first name, middle initial.
- Associated funeral home name.
- Funeral home contact information.
- Decedent's date of birth and date of death.

- Last four digits of the decedent's Social Security number.

In addition:

- No personal effects should accompany decedents.
- Each decedent must be in a body bag.
  - If body bags are needed, inform your local EMA.
- All decedents must be embalmed.

## Resources

- [Local emergency management agencies](#)
- Ohio Funeral Directors Association
  - [OFDAonline.org](http://OFDAonline.org)
  - 1-800-589-6332
- National Funeral Directors Association
  - [nfa.org/covid-19/technical-information](http://nfa.org/covid-19/technical-information)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - [COVID-19 and funerals FAQs](#)
  - [Postmortem guidance](#)