

Understanding Cremation



The Cremation Process

Cremation is the process by which high heat is used to reduce human remains to bone fragments. The container holding the body is placed in a combustion chamber known as a retort in which the cremation occurs. Following cremation, the fragments are taken out of the retort and reduced to a uniform size. Depending upon the size of the body, there are usually four to eight pounds of bone fragments remaining after cremation. Each cremation is done individually and carefully to ensure correct identification. Cremated remains are handled with dignity and respect throughout the entire process.

Witnessing the Cremation

Some families may desire to be present during the cremation process. Arrangements may be made ahead of time to have a limited number of people present when the container with the body is placed in the retort and the cremation is initiated. Cremation takes approximately three hours.

Embalming or preparation of the body prior to Cremation

If the body is to be held for several days prior to cremation, or if there is to be a funeral service with a public visiting period, viewing or wake prior to cremation, embalming is necessary for hygienic and aesthetic reasons. Also, if the body is to be transported across state or national borders before cremation, embalming may be required, depending upon local laws. Otherwise, embalming is not required prior to cremation.

Containers used during the Cremation process

If there is to be a public visiting period prior to cremation, a casket is usually required during the viewing and transportation to the crematory. A family may purchase or rent a casket. In the case of a casket rental, the interior box and casket lining are removed prior to cremation.

While Maple Hill Cemetery does not require a casket for cremation, we do require that the body be enclosed in a firm container made of combustible material. At Maple Hill Cemetery, the body is cremated in the same container in which it arrives, and the staff does not open the container unless directed by the medical examiner in certain circumstances. Any handles or other non-combustible parts of the container will be removed prior to cremation.

Timing of Cremation

Pennsylvania law requires a 24-hour waiting period after a death before cremation can be performed. Once all of the required paperwork has been received, the cremation will take place as soon as scheduling permits.

Distribution of Cremated Remains

At Maple Hill Cemetery, following the cremation process, the cremated remains are placed in a temporary container acceptable for burial and are returned to the funeral director or to the person signing the cremation authorization. Maple Hill encourages families to arrange for the placement of cremated remains in a permanent site, such as a cemetery. People sometimes decide to scatter cremated remains, but then realize later that they would have preferred a burial site to which

they and future generations could return to visit. At Maple Hill Cemetery we offer many burial options, including traditional burial in the ground or urn placement in a niche in our Columbarium.

Urns

An urn is a container for cremated remains. Urns may be made of marble, granite, bronze, ceramic, wood or plastic. Some families choose to use a treasured heirloom of an appropriate size for containing cremated remains. Maple Hill Cemetery has a selection of urns available in a range of sizes, styles and prices.

Burial in a family lot or grave

On the day of the interment, the burial site will be prepared according to our specifications, taking into account any special arrangements that have been made. Our staff will work with the funeral director of your choice to escort the funeral procession to the site, to assist in placing the urn, and to arrange flowers around the grave. We will provide you and your guests with privacy during any committal service. Our staff will then lower the urn and fill the grave; some families choose to be present and even help in the process of filling the grave.

Some family lots or graves at Maple Hill Cemetery no longer have sufficient room for casket burials, but they may accommodate urn burials, with the consent of the owner. If a memorial at the burial place is desired, however, be sure to ask what restrictions may apply.

Urns containing cremated remains may also be placed in our Columbarium. Niches at Maple Hill are designed to hold as many as four urns.

Scattering Ashes

Please note that, according to the rules and regulations of the Maple Hill Cemetery Association, it is not possible to scatter ashes above ground on Maple Hill Cemetery property.

Should you desire to scatter ashes at a public location (ex. pond, forest, beach, etc.) of special significance, please check with the necessary authorities to ensure that you are in compliance with local laws.

Commemoration

As with traditional burials, the type of interment space that you choose may determine your options regarding commemoration of your loved one. Please review our Rules and Regulations section on memorials or speak with our professional staff prior to making arrangement for a memorial.

Making your wishes known

Should you choose to be cremated upon your own death, it is possible to plan ahead. We suggest that you make your wishes known to your family and your attorney, thereby easing the burden placed on others at the time of your death. You should work with your attorney to create a Declaration of Intent form in which you may state your desire to be cremated, name the person you wish to arrange your cremation, and describe what should happen to the cremated remains. This form should be kept with your personal papers in an easily accessible location, and your family or friends should be made aware of its terms. Please see our section regarding Rules and Regulations for further information about our policies and procedures.