



March 30, 2020

Temporary Waiver of Rule for Funeral Home Directors During Coronavirus Emergency

Summary:

Federal guidelines advise social distancing that includes restricting public gatherings, including funerals, to no more than 10 people due to the coronavirus outbreak. This is making it difficult for funeral directors to accommodate a grieving family's needs while still meeting federal and state guidance regarding social distancing. In some cases, funeral directors are holding only one funeral a day, to allow 10 people to enter at a time to grieve, which puts strains on their normal practices as well as add pain for the grieving families.

In response to these guidelines, and in acknowledgement of the role funeral directors play in providing comfort to grieving families, the Department of State requested, and Governor Wolf granted, a temporary waiver to the length of time a funeral home may retain the recently deceased person's body before a burial.

In Pennsylvania, funeral directors licensed by the State Board of Funeral Directors are required to promptly prepare and bury the deceased person entrusted to their care within 10 days, unless they receive special permission from the board granting them a longer period of time. This regulation, the "10-day rule," will be temporarily suspended, and the length of time a funeral home may retain a deceased person's body is automatically extended to 30 days, until the COVID-19 emergency ends, to accommodate the need to maintain safe social distancing practices while still providing services and comfort to grieving families.

Funeral directors are encouraged to bury recently departed individuals within 10 days if possible, but are automatically granted an extension of up to 30 days where appropriate. Funeral directors do not need to file a request with the board or otherwise seek permission to exceed 10 days. However, if a funeral director believes they need more than 30 days, then the funeral director must seek special permission of the board in the same manner as provided for in the 10-Day Rule.