

COVID-19 Pandemic Protocols effective as of May 4, 2020

The undersigned cemeteries (the “Toronto Cemeteries Group” or “TCG”) are concerned about the health and safety of all individuals visiting our cemeteries, the families whom we serve, funeral directors, and our staff. We have been declared an essential service by government, and we must therefore take a very aggressive approach to COVID-19 so that we can continue to operate in these challenging times. In compliance with the CDC, the World Health Organization and protocols determined by our Federal, Provincial, and local governments, TCG continues to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation.

TCG recognizes that the provincial government’s restrictions on the numbers of individuals that may gather for funerals and our protocols that have been implemented over the last several weeks have had seriously impacted families who are not allowed the opportunity to grieve in the manner and by way of custom as had been done before the pandemic arose. While acknowledging the need to keep our cemetery staff safe and to participate in helping to keep the general public safe as well, having fluid protocols means that our restrictions must, with changing times and updated medical information, move in both directions as long as the private and public good are maintained. Recent developments such as the lockdowns of many hospitals and long-term care facilities, the public’s general adherence to physical distancing, have led to the changes that are being made now with our protocols. However, it must be noted that these protocols may be modified at any time as the situation changes.

Accordingly, we are again modifying our COVID-19 protocols with respect to a deceased who has died from COVID-19 or is strongly suspected to have died from COVID-19.

Effective May 4, 2020, and subject to change, we will be operating according to the following protocols:

Our Cemeteries:

Our cemeteries will all be closed to the public and will only open for scheduled graveside funerals. All other types of visits to the cemeteries will not be permitted until further notice.

Burial Services:

If someone has died from COVID-19 or is strongly suspected to have died from COVID-19, his/her burial will be carried out with only Clergy and Cemetery and Funeral Chapel staff in attendance. Anyone exposed to that deceased person may not attend the graveside service, and they will not be permitted on our cemetery grounds. Failure to comply with this directive will result in immediate summoning of the police as a public and health emergency situation, and criminal charges shall be laid.

The only exception to the foregoing paragraph will be in the case where a particular family member or representative(s) of the bereaved family presents the Funeral Chapel and the Cemetery administration with a TCG form completed by the Ontario licensed physician involved in the care of the deceased leading up to the death, and/or the chief administrator of the hospital or long-term care facility certifying:

- i) that the proposed attendee is not someone who has a quarantine obligation pursuant to the Government of Ontario or other legislative COVID-19 protocols, or**

ii) the facility was in a strict lockdown with no visitation whatsoever from any person for a period of at least 2 weeks prior to the decedent's death.

We will continue to perform all scheduled graveside burials at the cemeteries, subject to specific protocols regarding physical distancing, protections for attendees and cemetery staff, and limitations regarding gatherings (currently a maximum of 10 people including clergy, but not including cemetery staff or the funeral chapel staff). At this time, the cemetery building will not be accessible to the public which includes our public washrooms. Funeral Homes working with the cemeteries will be updated regarding changes to our COVID-19 protocols.

Administrative Office:

Our administrative building is closed, but our administrative functions are still operating. The public may still contact us by using e-mail or by telephone, all of which are listed at the end of this document.

We reserve the right to modify these protocols at any time. We appreciate your co-operation as we do our best to mitigate the risk of exposure to COVID-19 while at the same time servicing the Community in these challenging times.

COVID-19 Protocols for Interments

The gates of our cemeteries will remain locked and will only be opened by our cemetery staff, and only to permit entry for scheduled graveside funerals.

1. **We require the Funeral Chapel to notify the Cemetery if someone has died from COVID-19 or is strongly suspected to have died from COVID-19. His/her burial will be carried out with only Clergy and Cemetery and Funeral Chapel staff in attendance. To be clear: anyone exposed to that deceased person may not attend the graveside service, and they will not be permitted on our cemetery grounds. Failure to comply with this directive will result in immediate summoning of the police as a public and health emergency situation, and criminal charges shall be laid.**
2. **The only exception to the foregoing paragraph will be in the case where a particular family member or representative(s) of the bereaved family presents the Funeral Chapel and the Cemetery administration with a TCG form completed by the Ontario licensed physician involved in the care of the deceased leading up to the death, and/or the chief administrator of the hospital or long-term care facility certifying:**
 - i) **that the proposed attendee is not someone who has a quarantine obligation pursuant to the Government of Ontario or other legislative COVID-19 protocols, or**
 - ii) **the facility was in a strict lockdown with no visitation whatsoever from any person for a period of at least 2 weeks prior to the decedent's death.**
3. The Funeral Chapel must prepare a deceased person who has died of COVID-19 or is strongly suspected to have died of COVID-19, with the required protocols.
4. Graveside funerals for non-COVID-19 related or suspected deaths will in all cases be limited to 10 persons including clergy but not including Cemetery and Funeral Chapel staff.
5. Individuals attending graveside funerals must remain in their vehicles until they are instructed by Cemetery staff and/or Funeral Chapel staff.
6. Individuals at the service must stand at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from the grave, with a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) apart.
7. All individuals who will be attending the funeral service must be listed with their contact information on an attendee list. This list must be provided to the Cemetery administration at least two hours prior to the funeral service. The list is required should tracing of infection become necessary.

8. Funeral directors/assistants shall wait until the casket is lowered and cemetery staff have removed the lowering device and are at least 2 metres (6 feet) from the grave before allowing individuals to approach the grave.
9. Funeral directors/assistants will direct families to be at least 2 metres (6 feet) from one another and will use best efforts to remind families during the service. At all times, visitors and funeral chapel staff must always remain at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from cemetery staff.
10. Only 2 shovels will be provided during the service. There is to be no passing of shovels. Any individual who wishes to participate in shoveling may do so as long as physical distancing is maintained throughout the shovelling. We are expecting that the total attendance time within the cemetery grounds for any graveside funeral will be 30 minutes or less. Attendees will be expected to complete the service and return to their vehicles and leave the cemetery, after which time, if necessary, the cemetery staff will complete the filling of the grave.
11. All pallbearers must wear face masks and rubber/latex disposable gloves and anyone who handles the cemetery's shovels must also be wearing such gloves.
12. No unveilings, nor grave visitations will be permitted until further notice as these are not considered to be essential attendances in the current circumstances.
13. Our cemetery building will be closed to the public, including our public washrooms.
14. To mitigate risk of transmission, we will not be providing any washing cups or water at our outdoor hand washing stations at the cemeteries. Visitors should bring their own water for ritual hand washing after their visits.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation with this latest protocol revision. These protocols are subject to change at any time. Thank you very much for your co-operation

Issued: May 3, 2020