

Taranaki District Council's Regional Protocols for Cremations and Burials during Covid-19 Pandemic – Alert Level 3

Introduction

The purpose of this protocol is to establish some consistency across the region to enable Funeral Directors to understand and manage burials and cremations during the current national lockdown and any subsequent changes that may be advised by the Government or Ministry of Health. The protocols will likely remain in place for the duration of the official COVID-19 event.

The New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki District Councils have prepared this protocol for the management of burials and cremations within the Taranaki region at the respective Councils managed Cemeteries and the Taranaki Crematorium.

It includes procedural advice where burials will take place at urupā.

These protocols are based on national guidance and are not intended to duplicate or re-interpret the national guidance, but to provide detail on how they will be operationalised in the field.

Application of the protocols will be applied in all events and will not be any different whether the death is Covid-19 or non-Covid-19 related causes.

For more guidelines on Burials and Cremations during this time visit:

https://covid19.govt.nz/?gclid=EAlalQobChMlnP-glY3l6AIVSaaWCh2HlgvvEAAAYASAAEgJypPD_BwE

General Procedure Applicable to all interments

Prior to Cremation or Burial, the Funeral Director shall have discussion with the appropriate nominated Council representative to ensure all protocols are agreed and understood, the permissible group of 10 persons to attend burial or cremation confirmed and whether Council assistance will be required with movement of the casket etc. Safe distancing and maintaining hygiene standards are to be adhered to.

The Council representatives are:

New Plymouth District Council	Stuart Scarle	027 652 9789
	Keith May	027 443 0170
	Vicky Stevenson	027 652 9789
South Taranaki District Council	Phil Waite	027 295 1983
Stratford District Council	Melanie McBain	027 717 4607

It is essential to remember that the whole burial/cremation service at Council sites is the sole responsibility of the Funeral Director. Council provides only the physical burial or cremation.

Crematorium Protocol

- Chapel opened and prepped by staff who then leave to designated work area (where no public are allowed).
- **Only 10 people will be allowed to go to the crematorium for a committal service.** This must have been pre-arranged with the Funeral Director and family. For contact tracing purposes, the Funeral Director must have a register of all family/whānau who will be attending the crematorium and ensure strict adherence to the Ministry of Health guidelines for attendance.
- The list shall be made available to the Council upon request.
- Toilets remain closed and signage advising this displayed.
- Family/ whānau and Funeral Directors to carry casket to catafalque.
- Staff may be requested by the Funeral Director to assist with carrying casket to catafalque. This should be pre-arranged between the Funeral Director and the crematorium staff the day before the cremation service.
- The service will be confined to the area around the catafalque.
- Short committal service (15 minutes maximum).
- Family/ whānau vacates Chapel.
- Chapel disinfected (estimated cost \$500-\$700 per clean). Cleaning is undertaken in line with Ministry of Health guidelines. Includes fogging the Chapel with an anti-viral agent.
- The scheduling of services will reflect the time required to disinfect the crematorium between services.

Cemetery Protocol

- Grave prepared prior to burial.
- **Only 10 people will be allowed to go to the cemetery for the burial service.** This should have been pre-arranged between the Funeral Director and family. For contact tracing purposes, the Funeral Director must have a register of all family/whānau who will be attending the burial/ Cemetery and ensure strict adherence to the Ministry of Health guidelines for attendance.
- The list shall be made available to the Council upon request.
- Family/ whānau and Funeral directors to carry casket to grave and place on lowering device.
- Staff may be requested by Funeral Director to assist with carrying casket to burial plot. This should be pre-arranged between the Funeral Director and the Council staff the day before the burial service.
- Staff/contractors to remain on-site but isolated from group.
- Committal service (30 minutes maximum) and casket lowered as per normal procedures.
- By prior arrangement with the Council representative, family/whānau will be allowed to **partially** fill the grave site. A maximum of two shovels will be provided by the contractor.
- Funeral Director and family/ whānau leave cemetery.

- Staff in appropriate PPE gear will disinfect and clean the lowering device, mats, bio-hazard bin etc before placing on truck.
- Grave site filled.
- Staff leave.

Urupā Protocol

- In addition to the above protocols for burials and cremations, the following guidelines should be followed in respect to burials at Urupā.
- Funeral Director/whānau will work with marae to ensure the tūpāpaku (deceased) can be buried within the urupā.
- Only 10 people should be attending the short service.
- The whānau should work with the designated Kaiwhakarite from the marae/Iwi to organise whether the grave site is able to be dug and that the tūpāpaku can be carried to the gravesite.
- Guidelines provided for the National Emergency should be adhered to.

These protocols may be reviewed if the region experiences an increase in the number of deaths, where the capacity for the Funeral Directors and Councils to cope with the number of burials is overwhelming.

Signed 3 April 2020
Amended 20 April 2020

David Langford
On behalf of the
New Plymouth District Council

Liam Dagg
On behalf of the
South Taranaki District Council

Sven Hanne
On behalf of the
Stratford District Council