

Frequently Asked Questions

Burial and Other Arrangements

Is a casket required for burial or cremation in Alaska?

- *No law requires a casket for burial nor cremation.* However, you should check with the cemetery, which may require a certain type of container for burial.
- Federal Law requires that the funeral home or crematory inform you that you can use an alternative container, and that they make such containers available to you
- Federal Law requires funeral homes to accept caskets that consumers have purchased from other sources (online retailers; or you may build your own custom casket) if it is made of acceptable material.

Where can ashes be stored or scattered after cremation?

- In Alaska, there are no laws governing where you may keep or scatter ashes. Cremation renders ashes harmless, so there is no public health risk involved. *Use mindful and lawful judgement.*
- **Scattering ashes on private land** – Make sure you have landowner’s permission.
- **Scattering ashes on public land** – Check local and regional government regulations and zoning rules.
- **Scattering ashes on federal land** - Keep distance away from trails, roads, waterways, facilities. Also, check *National Park Service website*.
- **Scattering ashes at sea** – Contact the EPA representative in Alaska or see “*BURIAL OF HUMAN REMAINS at SEA*” on the *EPA website*.
- **Scattering ashes by air** – Cremains are not considered hazardous material by federal aviation laws, therefore, can be scattered as long as ashes are removed from their container before scattering. Do not scatter ashes in front of or near airplane’s engine.

Can I bury human remains on my private property?

- The State of Alaska does not have a state law that prohibits burial on private property.
- The Municipality of Anchorage has local ordinances prohibiting the burial of human remains except in an approved cemetery. Contact your local or regional government office or a local funeral home/ mortuary for information on burial of human remains outside of the Municipality of Anchorage.
- For more information on burial, see “*Burial Plots on Private Property*” published by the *Alaska Division of Environmental Conservation*.

Is embalming required in Alaska?

- There are no laws requiring a body to be embalmed in Alaska. However, the State of Alaska’s Department of Health recommends embalming if the remains cannot reach its destination within 24 hours of death.
- Embalming is commonly used, but consult with your funeral home of choice for options.
- Human remains shipped into or outside of Alaska must be embalmed. The funeral home is required to obtain a Burial Transit Permit before transporting a body into or outside of Alaska [Alaska Statutes 18.50.250].

Do funeral homes honor Alaska Native or American Indian customs in caring for the remains?

- All funeral homes will honor Native customs/ritual traditions for caring of your loved one. Inform the funeral home, *as early as possible*, of what you and your family desire.

Travel Arrangements

What is needed to transport the remains of my loved one?

Per *7Alaska Administrative Code 35.100 / 05.460*, a Burial Transit Permit is required for all of the following conditions:

- Moving the remains within Alaska
- Shipping the remains out of Alaska, provided that all requirements related to embalming and transport container are fulfilled
- Storing or holding the body for a period of greater than 72 hours after death
- Transporting remains on common carrier, private vehicle or chartered carrier

The person who assumes custody of the remains is responsible for obtaining, completing and registering the Burial Transit Permit with the Bureau of Vital Statistics, located inside University Center DMV, 3901 Old Seward Hwy, Suite 101, Anchorage. Phone numbers are (907) 269-0991 (Anchorage) or (907) 456-3391 (Juneau) and (907) 269-0991 (Anch Fax). The office is open Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

- If a Funeral Home assumes custody of the remains, they will obtain a Burial Transit Permit.
- If the Bureau of Vital Statistics is closed and/or you would like assistance with this process, the ANMC House Supervisor can complete and sign the Burial Transit Permit. The ANMC House Supervisor is available 24/7 by calling the main ANMC phone number at 907-563-2662. Then, the ANMC House Supervisor will give the person who is assuming custody of the remains a copy, email a copy to ANMC Medical Record at _aka-transcription@anthc.org (email), and send a copy to ANMC Medical Records via intra-hospital mail. ANMC Medical Records will submit the Burial Transit Permit to Bureau of Vital Statistics.

A copy of the Burial Transit Permit is available in these locations:

- health.alaska.gov/dph/VitalStats/Pages/btp.aspx (for additional information)
- anthc.org/bereavement

How do I get remains to home location from ANMC?

- All transport of human remains requires a Burial Transit Permit (see section above).
- Transport of remains back to home location is a personal expense. The funeral home (if one is chosen) will discuss and assist with logistics.
- A common carrier or private charter may be used for transport. Check with airlines regarding embalming requirements.
- The funeral home will share information regarding funding sources (as available) and transport options.
- No embalming is required, if transported to destination within 24 hours after death. A private vehicle may be used if feasible.
- ANMC will provide a body bag.

This information has been gathered to guide you, but consult with authorities or funeral home for most accurate information.