

Mortuary Science Storage Standards Modifications

HEALTH REGULATION DIVISION, MORTUARY SCIENCE

ATTENTION

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Health Regulation Division (HRD) is temporarily modifying requirements for how funeral homes, crematories, and alkaline hydrolysis facilities may hold decedents pending final disposition.

We have modified the standards and requirements for funeral homes to allow them to hold a decedent, in cold storage or in mobile refrigeration units, for longer than six calendar days. The modification also prescribes standards for where a decedent can be held on-site, such as coolers or mobile refrigeration units, while awaiting final disposition. In addition, we are modifying the standards for a crematory or alkaline hydrolysis facility to hold a decedent for more than 24 hours.

We are modifying these standards because some providers' storage facilities are currently full. When there are more deaths due to COVID-19, the capacity for storage will become problematic and will worsen as the death toll increases. Waiving these requirements allows providers the flexibility they need to respond to families' needs and also safely hold decedents in alternate storage areas, if necessary.

Requirements Being Modified and Waived

[Emergency Executive Order 20-32 \(PDF\) \(https://www.leg.state.mn.us/archive/execorders/20-32.pdf\)](https://www.leg.state.mn.us/archive/execorders/20-32.pdf) issued on April 8, 2020, allows the Commissioner of Health to temporarily delay, waive, or modify certain requirements so that providers can take necessary action to assess, identify, treat, and support Minnesotans with COVID-19 and protect those Minnesotans who are not infected.

The following Minnesota Statutes related to storage standards for state-regulated funeral homes, crematories, and alkaline hydrolysis facilities are now modified:

- Minnesota Statutes, chapter 149A, specifically:
 - Section 149A.90, subd. 8
 - Section 149A.91, subd. 3
 - Section 149A.94, subd. 1
 - Section 149A.941, subd. 15
 - Section 149A.95, subd. 6

What HRD is Doing Differently

During the COVID-19 peacetime emergency order and for 60 days after termination of the order, MDH will not issue correction orders or take enforcement action for decedents held in refrigeration longer than six days, or decedents held for cremation longer than 24 hours. Funeral providers are required to complete and maintain all documentation and requirements pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, chapter 149A.

EMERGENCY EXECUTIVE ORDER HEALTH REGULATION DIVISION PROVISION:
MORTUARY SCIENCE STORAGE STANDARDS

Implementation Guidance

MDH supports funeral providers and their efforts to protect public health, while providing funeral providers, families and communities the additional time needed to prepare decedents for final disposition. MDH recognizes that during the COVID-19 peacetime pandemic, it may not be feasible for funeral providers to comply with all provisions of Minnesota Statutes, chapter 149A regulating decedents before final disposition.

With the limitations on holding funerals and other services due to social distancing, and the increase in deaths due to COVID-19 pandemic, MDH issues the following guidance to assure safety during COVID-19-related restrictions:

- Funeral providers are allowed to hold decedents longer than six days, in refrigeration, while awaiting final disposition.
- Funeral providers are allowed to utilize coolers or mobile cold storage refrigeration units, under their current license, to increase storage capacity.
- Crematories and alkaline hydrolysis facilities are allowed to hold decedents longer than 24 hours, provided decedents are properly stored while awaiting final disposition.

You must:

- Complete removal certificates, embalming authorizations, and embalming reports as required by Minnesota Statutes, chapter 149A.
- Continue to meet the requirements for all documentation to complete cremations, including cremation authorizations, medical authorizations and a completed disposition permit as required by Minnesota Statutes, section 149A.95, subd.6.

Timeframe

Requirements for how decedents are held pending final disposition waived by Executive Order 20-32 must be reinstated no later than 60 days after the termination of the peacetime emergency declared in Executive Order 20-01.

Questions?

Contact the Mortuary Science Program at health.mortsci@state.mn.us or 651-201-3829.

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4101.