



**Ministry of Health and Social Development  
Health Emergency Operations Centre  
Government of the Virgin Islands**

**Guidelines for Burials in the Context of COVID-19**

This guide contains important information on what to do when burying a loved one whose death is related to COVID-19 in the Virgin Islands. It contains a step-by-step process for registering the death, getting approval for the final resting place, the viewing of loved ones and the funeral service.

Deceased victims of COVID-19 can be buried or cremated.

- Contact the Clergy/Pastor/Leader of the religious organisation with which the person is affiliated to inform of the death.
- Contact a funeral home to discuss plans for burial, cremation, or removal from the Territory.

**At the Hospital**

- Collect the **Death Notification Form** from the hospital.
- Take the **Death Notification Form** to the Registrar of Births and Deaths at the Civil Registry to register the death.

**At the Civil Registry**

- Fill out an application to register the death.
- Obtain a **Death Certificate** and a **Permission to Bury Certificate (Telephone contact: 468-3442)**

Seek permission for burial from the Ministry of Health and Social Development if the burial will be at a public or private cemetery or if the deceased will be exported from the Territory for burial or for cremation.

*\*This guide was created in consultation with The Coroner's Office, Civil Registry, Royal Virgin Islands Police Force, The Department of Disaster Management and the Health Emergency Operations Centre –Unified Command Centre.*

### **At Social Security (If applicable)**

- Apply to social security for funeral grant: document can be signed for check to go straight to funeral home or go towards other funeral expenses.

### **At Social Development (If applicable)**

- Apply to Social Development to provide assistance to the bereaved

### **At the Ministry of Health and Social Development**

1. Customers requiring Burial Services can:
  - a. Authorise the Funeral Home to procure the burials services on their behalf. Services would include filling out the Application for Burial Form, obtaining the Death Certificate and a Permit to Bury from the Civil Registry and submitting the application to the Ministry of Health, payment of burial fees and pick up the approval letters.
  - b. Clients are required to contact the Manager for the burial ground to secure a burial spot.

Or

2. Request a service or the Application for Burial Form via email [ministryofhealth@gov.vg](mailto:ministryofhealth@gov.vg) or telephone 468-2272. You would need the following:
  - Obtain a Death Certificate and a Permit to Bury from the Civil Registry.
  - Complete the Application to Bury form, which can be obtained from the Ministry of Health and Social Development.
  - Ensure that you have stated the proposed place and date of burial.
  - Contact the Manager for the burial ground to secure a burial spot.
  - Burial Fee \$35 adult or \$15 child (12 and under)

A response will be given within two working days of receipt of the application and all supporting documents. Documents can be picked up at the Ministry or emailed to the client.

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## Protocols for COVID-19 Burials

As families think about laying their loved ones to rest, we want persons to be aware that some of the traditional practices for funerals in the Virgin Islands will be restricted, specifically for COVID-19 related deaths. This guide has been developed to allow families in this time of bereavement to safely grieve, while mourning the loss of a loved one. Please be advised that all health and safety protocols must be maintained in accordance with the COVID-19 Control and Suppression Measures.

### Viewing of Loved Ones

- Only immediate family members (Mother, Father, Siblings, Children, Spouse) are allowed to view the deceased.
- Viewings will only take place at the funeral home.
- Family members will not be allowed to make physical contact with the deceased.
- The body of the deceased will not be open to public viewing at any church, sanctuary or funeral chapel.

### Funeral Service

- After viewing at the funeral home by immediate family, the body of the deceased should be taken directly to the grave site for immediate burial.
- Any service in memory of the deceased can be held thereafter.
- According to the Public Health (COVID-19 Control and Suppression Measures) (No.4) Order, 2021, all gatherings including a funeral shall be limited to one person per sixty-four square feet and shall not exceed 25 persons at any given time.
- People attending any funeral related services or gatherings will be required to supply their name and contact details so that they can be used for contact tracing if necessary.
- Persons attending funeral services or gatherings are required to observe the health and safety protocols, including wearing of mask, sanitising of hands and observing social distancing measures.
- Persons organising funerals are responsible for ensuring all safety measures are met and that personal protective equipment (PPEs) are being worn by attendees at all times.

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## Cremation

- Crematory services are not available locally; however persons can make arrangements through the funeral home on how this can be arranged through their services.

We know that the loss of a loved one can be quite overwhelming and painful, and we grieve with you and pray your strength during this most difficult time.