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# I N D E P E N D E N T

## **The Association of Independent Funeral Homes of Virginia**

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B. Bennett Keeney Jr. "Bo"

**2018-2**



*Greetings, My Fellow Colleagues*

*Spring has finally arrived and the pollen is letting us know that.*

*Sorry I could not attend the annual conference, but as you all know that being a funeral service professional that when duty calls we must respond. I understand that the attendance, speakers and fellowship was good and for that I am truly grateful.*

*We all know that the new cremation reports are now available on line, and to me it is a little more time consuming but that's nothing new. I have learned to go with the flow and try to keep things as simple as possible.*

*This is my time of year, we can finally shed the cold clothes and finally go outside and feel free. I can sense the smell of charcoal on the grill and ice cold beverages on the deck with close family and friends. So go ahead and have yourself a ball, just do so in moderation.*

*With that, I wish you a most pleasant of summer until we meet again.*

*With warmest regards,*

*I am Nathan A. Hines*

# OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

FROM: Keshia Singleton, State Project Manager  
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner *Keshia Singleton*  
[keshia.singleton@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:keshia.singleton@vdh.virginia.gov)

SUBJECT: Electronic Cremation Certificate & Additional Information regarding Cremation Authorizations

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I am writing to inform you that the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) has an electronic version of the cremation certificate that you can start using immediately. The OCME will not be purchasing any additional carbon-copy cremation certificates; however, you may utilize the remaining supply that you have. All local medical examiners are aware of this form and have been instructed to start using it. The cremation certificate states that a copy of the signed cremation certificate needs to be retained by the local medical examiner, the funeral home, the OCME and the crematory. Every local medical examiner is responsible for sending a copy of each cremation certificate they sign, along with a copy of the signed death certificate, to the OCME.

Some additional information regarding cremation authorizations:

- All local medical examiners have been told that they are not allowed to sign blank cremation certificates.
- Every local medical examiner must fully examine the decedent, which includes rolling the decedent over to view the backside of the decedent. The decedent should not have any clothing on and all medical therapy should be removed prior to examination to ensure there is no unforeseen trauma.
- Cremation authorizations should only be conducted at a hospital, crematory or funeral home and not at private homes or other businesses.
- Cremation certificates should only be signed for deaths that occur in Virginia.

Please contact your respective OCME district office for any questions.

**The new fillable cremation certificate may be found at:**

**[https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/funeral/docs/Cremation\\_Certificate.pdf](https://www.dhp.virginia.gov/funeral/docs/Cremation_Certificate.pdf)**

## **Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers**

### **Guidance on Time Credit for Continuing Education**

Credit for one hour of live coursework in continuing education must include at least 50 minutes of instruction.

Credit for self-study courses or activities is limited to the actual amount of time it takes the licensee to complete the course or activity and may not exceed the time credit assigned by the approved continuing education provider. For example, if a self-study course is assigned two hours of CE credit by the provider, but the licensee completes the course in one hour, he may only count one hour of credit toward completion of this CE requirement for renewal of licensure. If the course is assigned two hours of CE credit by the provider, but the licensee takes three hours to finish, he may only count two hours of CE credit.





*Now more than ever, you need to adapt to keep up. Are you looking for change that will help your funeral home run smarter, not harder?*

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## Ashes into diamonds: A new trend taking over the funeral industry in the USA, Canada and Mexico



The funeral industry in the USA is valued at over \$20.7 Billion with approximately 2.4 million deaths annually. The foundation for this industry was in embalming; treating a corpse with preservatives in order to prevent decomposition and then presenting the embalmed body for public viewing before burial. Today, more technologically improved alternatives like ashes into diamonds are fast gaining in popularity, credited by its uniqueness and affordability.

### How Cremation Diamonds Companies Can Turn Our Departed Loved-Ones into Diamonds

Ashes into Diamonds, also known as cremation diamonds are synthetic diamonds grown in the lab from the carbon extracted from the ashes of a departed loved one. This gem can be passed down to generations within the family on special life events such as weddings or engagements as an everlasting legacy to the life the deceased has lived. [Specialist Ashes into Diamonds vendors](#) like LONITÉ from Switzerland with an existing branch in Buffalo, New York State, in the USA, a border city with Canada, analyze the cremated ashes to determine whether they contain enough carbon to be turned into a diamond; about 8 oz. of ashes or 0.4 oz. of hair are required. The ashes are then placed in a specialized crucible and the crucible is then heated to over 5000F to make sure every element except carbon oxidizes. Then, the temperature is raised further so that the carbon can turn into graphite. The graphite, with a metal catalyst and a diamond seed crystal are placed into a core. The core goes into a specialized diamond press capable of creating extreme tension bringing the pressure to about 800,000 pounds/square inches. [The process of turning human ashes into cremation diamonds](#) can take about 6 to 9 months. During the last stretch, when the press is working, the temperature in the room stays at about 2500F so that the ashes turned diamonds become solid. This process results in rough crystals that are cut and polished into cremation diamonds. The color of the finished ashes into diamond ranges from white to dark blue, depending on the boron content analyzed previously in the ashes or hair of the deceased.

### The Ashes into Diamonds Process Requires a Combined set of Skills and Jobs

Ashes into Diamonds is a craftsmanship dedicated to creating gems as unique as the persona of your departed loved one was. The process therefore requires a unique combination of different skills to produce ashes into diamonds from start to finish. This craftsmanship requires a good understanding of gemology which is the science dealing with natural and artificial [gemstone](#) materials. Some ashes into diamond vendors are academically trained gemologists and are qualified to identify and evaluate gems. Ashes into diamonds also requires understanding and application of the ashes into diamond HPHT creation technology and the skill of art and design which combines the expression of human creativity and imagination in a visual form and drawing a sketch to illustrate the look of the ashes into diamonds before it is made.

### The Increasing Popularity of Ashes into Diamonds in the USA

Most families in the USA choose Ashes into Diamonds because this post burial alternative offers lasting solutions to issues affecting the existing traditional burial practices like cemetery burials.

Ecologically safe: [Cemetery burials release 10% more carbon](#) than otherwise required in creation of Ashes into Diamonds. This results into narcosis and suffocation of living organisms which in turn threaten the existence of life on this planet in the long run. Carbon dioxide is an essential part of the global carbon cycle in the environment and as a greenhouse gas; it absorbs heat in the atmosphere and

sends some back to the surface of the earth resulting into global warming. Cemetery burials also pollute our groundwaters because of the body embalming process which releases toxic fluids. Even with the existence of more ecological coffins, the long-term maintenance of the tombs endangers natural resources. Lack of burial space in cemeteries and in columbaria at large: There are approximately 2.4 million deaths in USA annually and therefore to fully utilize every inch of space there is, cemetery operators have resorted to the kind of creative use of space that involves squeezing coffins into every barren inch, narrowing paths and stacking coffins nine-deep. A case in point the largest Jewish graveyard in Brooklyn, Washington Cemetery ran out of land in the 2010 after tearing up roads and pathways to utilize every cubic inch of ground. Rise in prices of traditional burial spaces. Due to shortage in burial plots, the prices of the few existing ones sky rocket by almost 50% annually; on average, a traditional burial in USA costs \$8000 and can go up to \$10,000 compared to \$706 in the 1960s

<https://augustafreepress.com/ashes-into-diamonds-a-new-trend-taking-over-the-funeral-industry-in-the-usa-canada-and-mexico/>



*Warfield-Rohr  
Casket Co., Inc.*

### IFHV MEMBER BENEFIT WITH WARFIELD-ROHR

To show support of Virginia's independent firms and particularly IFHV members, Warfield-Rohr Casket Company just announced a special casket program just

for IFHV firms. The program was reviewed and unanimously endorsed by the IFHV Board of Directors.

The Warfield-Rohr Benefit Program for IFHV Members offers member firms a quantity driven discount plan of up to a combined Terms Discount/Rebate of up to 20%. The rebate program began on August 1 and ends July 31 of each year. The rebate program quarters will end on November 30, February 28, May 31 and August 31 of each year.

Quantity of Caskets Purchased	Terms Discount	IFHV Member Rebate	Total Percentage Rebate	Contribution to IFHV per Casket
1 – 25	5%	6%	11%	\$2.00
26 -39	5%	9%	14%	\$2.00
40 – 59	5%	10%	15%	\$2.00
60 – 99	5%	13%	18%	\$2.00
100+	5%	15%	20%	\$2.00

To further show support for IFHV and its members, Warfield-Rohr will additionally contribute \$2 for every casket sold by them to an IFHV member. This program is an example of the benefits of IFHV membership and how IFHV works for the mutual benefit of its firm and associate members. Any questions may be addressed by your Warfield-Rohr sales representatives.

## **New Laws that go into effect July 1, 2018**

Every year the Keeney Group, Inc. represents the members of the Association of Independent Funeral Homes of Virginia before the Virginia General Assembly. This year there were over 3,500 pieces of legislation introduced and heard before the legislature. With guidance from the IFHV Board of Directors, Bruce and Bo Keeney again successfully advocated on your behalf on a number of bills of interest to Virginia funeral directors. Below are a few pieces of legislation that passed through the legislature and will go into effect July 1 of this year.



### **HB 1158 - Wilt - Death certificates; medical certification, electronic filing, hospice.**

Provides that in cases in which a death occurs under the care of a hospice provider that provides services to recipients of medical assistance services pursuant to the state plan for medical assistance services, the medical certification portion of a death certificate shall be filed electronically through the Electronic Death Registration System.

### **SB 143 - Spruill - Mortuary science education; practical experience required.**

Requires every public institution of higher education that offers a degree in mortuary science to require students to complete practical experience in the areas of funeral service and embalming during the first year of such program. The bill also provides that a person who is duly enrolled in a mortuary education program may assist in embalming while under the supervision of a funeral service licensee or embalmer with an active, unrestricted license issued by the Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers, provided that such embalming occurs in a funeral service establishment licensed by the Board and in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Board.

### **SB 831 - Reeves - Funeral services; acceptance of third-party-provided caskets.**

Excludes from the definition of "practice of funeral services" the sale to the public of receptacles and containers used for burial, entombment, or other final disposition of a dead human body or the remains thereof.

### **SB 959 - McDougle - Disposition of unclaimed dead body; final orders of transportation and disposition.**

Requires that a court enter a final order of transportation and disposition of an unclaimed dead body within one business day of receiving a request for such order by the attorney for the county or city in which the person having custody of the unclaimed dead body is located or, if there is no county or city attorney, the attorney for the Commonwealth in such county or city, and requires such request to include transportation and disposition instructions for the unclaimed dead body. The bill allows a court to authorize the clerk to issue a final order for disposition of an unclaimed dead body, without judicial review, to the attorney for the Commonwealth who has submitted a completed request for a final order.



## **A Review of Virginia's Next of Kin and Cremation Disposition Laws**

**"Next of kin"** means any of the following persons, **regardless of the relationship to the decedent**: any person designated to make arrangements for the disposition of the decedent's remains upon his death pursuant to § [54.1-2825](#), the legal spouse, child aged 18 years or older, parent of a decedent aged 18 years or older, custodial parent or noncustodial parent of a decedent younger than 18 years of age, siblings over 18 years of age, guardian of minor child, guardian of minor siblings, maternal grandparents, paternal grandparents, maternal siblings over 18 years of age and paternal siblings over 18 years of age, or any other relative in the descending order of blood relationship.



In the absence of a next of kin, a person designated to make arrangements for disposition of the decedent's remains pursuant to § [54.1-2825](#), an agent named in an advance directive pursuant to § [54.1-2984](#), or any guardian appointed pursuant to Chapter 20 (§ [64.2-2000](#) et seq.) of Title 64.2 who may exercise the powers conferred in the order of appointment or by § [64.2-2019](#), or upon the failure or refusal of such next of kin, designated person, agent, or guardian to accept responsibility for the disposition of the decedent, then any other person 18 years of age or older who is able to provide positive identification of the deceased and is willing to pay for the costs associated with the disposition of the decedent's remains shall be authorized to make arrangements for such disposition of the decedent's remains. If a funeral service establishment or funeral service licensee makes arrangements with a person other than a next of kin, designated person, agent, or guardian in accordance with this section, then the funeral service licensee or funeral service establishment shall be immune from civil liability unless such act, decision, or omission resulted from bad faith or malicious intent.

### **When next of kin disagree.**

In the absence of a designation under § [54.1-2825](#), when there is a disagreement among a decedent's next of kin concerning the arrangements for his funeral or the disposition of his remains, any of the next of kin may petition the circuit court where the decedent resided at the time of his death to determine which of the next of kin shall have the authority to make arrangements for the decedent's funeral or the disposition of his remains. The court may require notice to and the convening of such of the next of kin as it deems proper.

### **Disposition of cremains.**

A funeral director may dispose of the cremains of an individual by interment, entombment, inurnment, or by scattering of the cremains, if after 120 days from the date of cremation, the contracting agent has not claimed the cremains or instructed the funeral director as to final disposition. The funeral director shall keep a permanent record of all cremains which identifies the method and site of final disposition. The costs and all reasonable expenses incurred in disposing of the cremains shall be borne by the contracting agent. Upon the disposition of the cremains, the funeral director shall not be liable for the cremains or for the method of final disposition. Except as otherwise provided in § [54.1-2808.2](#), any funeral director in possession of unclaimed cremains prior to July 1, 1993, may dispose of such cremains in accordance with the provisions of this section. However, no funeral director shall, without written permission of the contracting agent, dispose of cremains in a manner or a location in which the cremains of the deceased are commingled, except in the scattering of cremains at sea, by air, or in an area used exclusively for such purpose, or place, temporarily, the cremains of persons in the same container or urn.

**Baker-Post Funeral Home & Cremation Center**

Mr. Michael Post  
10001 Nokesville Road  
Manassas, VA 20110  
703-368-3116

**Phelps Funeral & Cremation Service**

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PO Box 3744  
Winchester, VA 22604  
540-722-2424

**Given's Funeral Home**

Mr. Robert Givens  
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Pearisburg, VA 24134  
5420-921-1650

**Greene Funeral Home Inc.**

Nelson E. Green, Jr.  
814 Franklin Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
703-549-0089



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