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What to consider when arranging a funeral or cremation in Delaware

This brief guide to arranging a funeral or cremation in Delaware aims to help families faced with the task of arranging a funeral or cremation. We have put together some top tips to help you arrange an affordable funeral, and the answers to some key questions you may have about funeral planning and funeral laws in Delaware..

Choosing a funeral home in Delaware

Choosing a funeral home to handle arrangements is one of the first things a family thinks about. Historically most families just used their nearest funeral home, one that their family had previously used, or one recommended to them. But today all this is changing. Families are becoming much savvier about funeral costs, and much more concerned about shopping around for good value services. As more families look towards cremation, this can also be a reason why research into which provider to use can become an important aspect of funeral planning.

To select which funeral home is right for your family's needs, it can help to frame some key requirements you need from a funeral provider. Are you planning on holding a service at the funeral home facility? **Do you want a traditional burial, something more contemporary, or simple cremation service? Is your budget important and are you looking to find out about how much the funeral will cost before you enter into a funeral contract?** These questions can help you form selection criteria for choosing a **funeral services provider in Delaware**. All funeral establishments in Delaware are licensed by the Department of State Division of Professional Regulation.

What does an average funeral cost in Delaware?

The average cost of a funeral in the U.S. is \$7,640 (according to the NFDA – National Association of Funeral Directors 2019), and this does not include any cemetery fees. This gives you a general idea of what 'average' costs are. Of course, a funeral can cost more than this, or you can manage to arrange a funeral for less if you shop around for an affordable funeral package. The DFS Memorials provider for Delaware offers a complete traditional funeral (including casket) for the cost of \$4,450. The cost for a traditional burial is largely dependent on the type of casket you select and the final cost of your cemetery plot and grave marker.

All funeral homes in Delaware must have a general price list (GPL) that outlines their service charges and funeral merchandise prices. They must provide a copy of their GPL when they quote you a price according to the Federal Trade Commission's 'The Funeral Rule'. It is recommended that you DO compare the same services, and shop around and compare funeral prices between more than one funeral home. That way you can be sure that you have a "best value" funeral service.

DFS Memorials Affordable Cremation Providers

Wilmington area. Cremation cost from \$1,095. Call (302) 212-0047

Cremation laws and regulations in Delaware

As more families are considering cremation, the questions about the legal aspects of cremation arise. It is important to understand how these affect you. A cremation is such a final disposition of the deceased that careful regulations are in place to ensure everything is conducted to the utmost professional standards. Before cremation can be performed, the next of kin must ID the deceased and a Cremation Authorization Form must be completed. There is a legal requirement for a 24-hour waiting period before the cremation can proceed. A casket is not required for cremation the body can be cremated in a 'rigid cremation container'. This is generally a simple cardboard or plywood container.

How much does a cremation cost in Delaware?

A typical cremation funeral service will cost in the region of \$3,500 (depending upon the ancillary services/products you select). This is the type of cremation service that replaces a full traditional funeral. A service is conducted prior to the cremation process. However, it is possible to arrange a cremation for considerably less than this.

Arranging a direct cremation in Delaware

Direct cremation costs \$1,095 in Wilmington. This is the least expensive cremation option for families. Direct cremation means that there are no services, the cremation goes ahead once all the documentation has been completed and then the cremated remains are returned to the family in a temporary container. Incremental options, such as a private family viewing or an upgraded cremation urn, can be added to a basic direct cremation package for an additional fee.

If you are concerned about funeral costs, the DFS Memorials providers in Delaware offer low-cost cremation services and affordable burial services. All DFS Memorials providers guarantee to offer a 'best value' direct cremation package.

How do I decide between a burial or a cremation in Delaware?

If the deceased left a will, written funeral wishes, or expressed a preference, this saves you having to make this decision. However, sometimes this is not the case and surviving family members must make this decision. If money is a concern then the decision can be affected by what funds are available to pay for the funeral. If you are at all unsure about burial or cremation, it is wise to consult with family, friends and spiritual counsel. Do bear in mind that a funeral home can hold the deceased in refrigerated storage and you do not have to make an instant decision. However, there could be a daily storage charge for this. Our article on 'Choosing burial or cremation' may provide further reading.

Does the deceased have to be embalmed?

No, there is no Delaware state law, stipulating that you must have the deceased embalmed. However, some funeral homes may adopt policies that insist upon embalming if a public viewing or service is being held with the deceased in repose. If you proceed with a timely funeral, there is really no need for embalming (and it can just be another fee to add to your funeral costs!)

Purchasing a casket or grave marker in Delaware

If you are proceeding with a traditional burial, the purchase of a casket and a grave marker will be two of the larger purchases to make. The casket market has been opened up by the FTC's funeral rule and there are now both online and high street casket retailers. Once upon a time, you could only buy a casket from a funeral home and at a large mark-up. Today you can buy a casket from Walmart for \$995! You can purchase a casket from elsewhere than your funeral home and they MUST accept it, and cannot charge you a surcharge.

We have comprehensive guides to buying a casket or grave marker, so I would recommend you visit these sections for more detailed information.

What can I do with the cremated remains?

Delaware state law states that cremated remains may be "disposed of in such a way as is desired by the person receiving them." (16 Delaware Code § 3161.) Cremated remains can be interred just as you would a body. They can be interred into an existing grave plot or into a niche within a columbarium. You may also store cremated remains in a cremation urn or there are numerous memorialization options today, such as cremation diamonds and other artifacts.

If you choose to scatter the ashes you can do so on private land with the consent of the landowner. Generally, you can scatter on public lands so long as you pay due diligence to common-sense guidelines, but you should check whether there are any permits required for National Park lands. Check with the ordinance of the park before proceeding. Some parks require a permit but do not charge for it.

A sea scattering can be conducted if you wish. According to the guidelines of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a sea burial must take place 3 nautical miles to sea. You are required to submit a form declaring the scattering within 30 days. As cremated remains are not considered a pollutant and are sterile, there seems to be no specific legislation against them being dispersed, so long as the ashes are dispersed into the water, or a biodegradable urn/scattering tube is used. Delaware is within Region 3 (Mid-Atlantic) of the EPA and their main contact number is (800) 438-2474.

Can I pre-plan a funeral in Delaware?

Pre-planning a funeral can ensure your explicit wishes are met and can remove the stress, and financial responsibility, from your surviving family. You can make pre-need funeral arrangements direct with a funeral home or purchase burial insurance. A funeral home in Delaware cannot own cemetery property or receive any commission in connection with the sale or transfer of any cemetery plot.

What you DO need to consider is that funeral prices could indeed be coming down. Funeral companies promote preplanning on the basis that it "locks into today's prices", but with the cremation trend increasing, and more funeral homes competing for the 'affordable' funeral market – the reality is that the funeral costs are not as 'fixed' as they once were.

Concerns over misuse and mismanagement of funeral trust funds have also resulted in a lack of consumer faith in prepaid funeral contracts. Another funeral planning alternative is to document your wishes and put aside the appropriate funds in a POD Payable on Death account or a Totten Trust. This enables family to access the funds at the time of need and make the funeral arrangements, but you keep in control of your monies and any accrued interest. Read more in our article 'What is my best and safest option for putting aside money for a funeral'.

Can I donate my body to science in the Delaware?

Yes, donating your body to science as an anatomical gift can offer an alternative to traditional death care. Most of the national organizations that deal with full-body donation handle everything from the moment you notify them of the death, including collecting the body, the donation, the free cremation and the return of the cremated remains to the family a few weeks later. Opting for body donation enables family to have the cremated remains returned to them at no cost, they can then arrange their own memorial service for the family, if they so choose. Check out our **Body Donation** section.

How can I transport a loved one either back to, or from, Delaware after death?

If a loved one needs to be transported back to a state or country of origin following their death in Delaware, you will need the services of a funeral director who can arrange funeral shipping for you. This generally needs a funeral professional who can coordinate arrangements at the place of death and wherever the body is being shipped to.

If transporting a loved one between states in the US you have the option of flying the body or transporting the body by land. Certain regulations do apply to move a body, and it is likely that embalming may be required as well as specific containers to hold the casket. Shipping a body can be quite expensive, so the other alternative you have is to have the body cremated at the place of death, and then transport back the cremated remains. Visit our section on **Funeral Shipping** to read more.

Who should I contact if I have a complaint about a funeral home in Delaware?

It does sometimes happen that you may have a complaint or grievance with a funeral home and you do not manage to resolve it directly with the funeral director. In this case, you should make your complaint in writing to the Department of State: Division of Professional Regulation – Board of Funeral Services that regulate and license funeral businesses in the Delaware. They can be contacted at: Cannon Building, Suite 203, 861 Silver Lake Blvd, Dover, DE 19904 Phone (302) 744-4500

I hope this guide has helped to answer some of your immediate questions. Please check out our Library/info section for our full catalogue of resources to help you through the process of arranging a funeral. Feel free to contact us if we can be of any assistance with any further questions you may have.

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Wilmington

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