



# Department of Public Health

**MAYOR**  
Dee Margo

## EL PASO FUNERAL HOMES AND CEMETERY ORDERS AND GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**CITY COUNCIL**

### EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

**District 1**  
Peter Svarzbein

**May 14, 2020**

**District 2**  
Alexandra Anello

This Order supersedes the prior El Paso Funeral Homes and Cemetery Guidance and Orders During COVID-19 Pandemic.

**District 3**  
Cassandra Hernandez

The City of El Paso follows guidelines and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Texas Governor’s applicable Open Texas Checklist, and the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) related to COVID-19.

**District 4**  
Dr. Sam Morgan

**District 5**  
Isabel Salcido

To prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in our community, the City of El Paso strongly recommends that all funeral services be conducted remotely via webcast or video conferencing.

**District 6**  
Claudia L. Rodriguez

**District 7**  
Henry Rivera

### Guidance for Funeral Homes

**District 8**  
Cissy Lizarraga

The City of El Paso recommends that funeral homes implement these guidelines as applicable, and highly recommends the following:

- Train staff and volunteers on healthy hygiene practices.
- Communicate the importance of healthy hygiene practices with members and visitors.
- Ensure handwashing strategies include washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Ensure adequate supplies (e.g., soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer, tissue) to support healthy hygiene practices.
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched at least once per day and service those areas after each funeral service.

**CITY MANAGER**  
Tommy Gonzalez

20-1052-1069/991644.2/Funeral Homes & Cemetery Guidance



DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL SERVICES



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- Provide EPA-registered disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down.
- Ensure adequate cleaning and disinfection supplies.
- Require staff to stay home when sick, even without documentation from doctors. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family or household members or care for children in the event of school dismissals. Develop flexible telework policies as appropriate.

## Funerals for Deceased due to COVID-19

- Remote services are strongly recommended via webcast or videoconference.
- People should not touch the body of someone who has died of COVID-19.
- Funerals may be postponed for a later date if appropriate.
- All attendees must wear face masks and must observe the 6-foot social distancing requirement.
- Funeral homes must provide a place for proper handwashing and hand-sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol base close to casket and other common areas.
- If high risk (a person that is 65 or older and/or that has pre-existing health conditions) populations attend, designate an area inside the facility for at-risk populations or offer a service for at-risk population attendees only.
- Funeral Homes should consider limiting the size of any gathering in a single room to no more than 10. The limit of 10 persons does not include funeral home staff, the clergy/celebrant or cemetery staff.
- Ensure proper spacing between attendees:
  - Keep at least two empty seats (or six feet separation) between parties in any row, except as follows:
    - Two or more members of the same household can sit adjacent to one another, with two seats (or six feet of separation) empty on either side.
    - Two individuals who are not members of the same household but who are attending together can sit adjacent to one another, with two seats (or six feet separation) empty on either side.
  - Alternate rows between attendees (every other row left empty).
- Funeral Homes must provide an adequate amount of waste containers for proper disposal of used/contaminated tissue.

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## Funerals Services for Deceased

- Funeral Homes should consider restricting funerals services and private viewings to immediate family members and close friends.
- When possible, viewings and gatherings shall not exceed 10 persons in a viewing room, waiting area or other room, and all persons must observe the 6 foot social distancing rule.
- Funeral Homes must require all persons, guests and employees to observe strict health habits such as hand hygiene, covering cough and sneezes.
- All persons, guests and employees must wear a face mask that covers their nose and mouth.
- Funeral homes must provide a place for proper handwashing and sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol base close to casket and other common areas.

## Cemetery Services

- The City of El Paso recommends people do not gather, but that they observe burial services remotely via webcast or video conference. Burial Services may be held at the gravesite and all persons in attendance must observe the 6 foot social distancing rule; however, the nature of the disposition, such a cremation, may mean a service in the funeral home is more appropriate.
- Cemetery services must require attendees to follow the same social distancing guidelines for funeral services and set up seating accordingly.

## Options Funeral Directors May Offer Families

- Private viewing for only immediate family and/or close friends and have a large memorial service for all family and friends at a later date.
- Webcasting or livestreaming a funeral is recommended.
- Discourage attendance of family members in high risk category (e.g. elderly (>65 yr.), immune compromised, lung conditions, heart conditions, etc.)

If a family requests a small service, advise them of CDC guidance, including, but not limited to: encouraging those who are ill and/or at-risk (e.g. elderly, immune-compromised, etc.) to stay home and require all to follow healthy habits such as social distancing, hand hygiene, covering cough and sneezes, etc.

20-1052-1069/991644.2/Funeral Homes & Cemetery Guidance



DELIVERING EXCEPTIONAL SERVICES



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<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/funeral-guidance.html>

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hector I. Ocaranza".

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Hector I. Ocaranza, M.D., MPH  
Health Authority City/County of El Paso, TX

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DELIVERING **EXCEPTIONAL** SERVICES