

June 11, 2020

Dear members of the public and Metro partners,

The Metro Historic Cemeteries Program wants to provide you with an update on our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to operate, with the understanding that this is an evolving situation and things could change again rapidly. In that case, we will communicate with you as soon as possible.

As you know, Metro is continuing to work closely with the Oregon Health Authority and local public health agencies. The health and safety of our employees and our community is our top priority. We are all navigating through an unprecedented situation, and we will work together to ensure that we reduce impacts on employees and our community during this public health crisis.

We'd like to share with you the changes we have made to our policies and procedures. In order to do our part to help keep our community, staff and the families we serve safe, we are making these changes:

- Metro is implementing a mandatory twenty percent (20%) schedule reduction for most of its staff, including Historic Cemeteries Program employees. Cemeteries staff will continue to work Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but will be staggering their schedules throughout the week.
- For this reason, Metro will only be offering burial services Monday through Saturday for the foreseeable future. Sunday burials may be allowed for religious reasons only, and will need to be approved by the Cemeteries Program Manager on a case-by-case basis.
- Also, due to this schedule reduction, we will not be checking emails or returning phone calls outside of regular work hours. If you cannot reach the Metro Cemeteries staff during regular work hours, please call the main Cemeteries phone line (503-797-1709) and leave a message or send an email to cemetery@oregonmetro.gov.
- Metro will continue to consider the guidelines provided by the Governor's Office, county officials and public health organizations, and then create and apply its own policies and procedures regarding cemeteries operations. Metro is committed to preserving the health and safety of the community, staff and contractors first and foremost, and our operations policies will continue to reflect that value.

The changes we outlined in our May 21, 2020 letter remain in place:

- At this time, we will no longer be able to meet with families in person to make arrangements.
- We are no longer accepting cash payments for any purchases. We will accept credit cards, cashier's checks, personal checks or money orders only.

- For the safety of our staff and the digging crew, we are no longer providing the option of a graveside service. For casketed burials, the cemetery staff, digging crew and funeral home staff will place the casket onto the casket liner and the digging crew will immediately lower the liner into the ground. At this time, we are not allowing caskets to be open for any part of the burial service.
- For urn burials, one family member may place the urn at the burial site or in the urn liner and cemetery staff will complete the burial once the family member has stepped back into their car.
- If family members would like to witness the lowering of the casket or the closing of the grave, they may do so from their vehicles. We will allow a maximum of five (5) vehicles near the gravesite. Please note that in some cemeteries the view of the grave site from a vehicle could be obstructed or not possible.
- We continue to respond to calls when a death occurs in a timely, compassionate and professional manner, so please leave a message or send an email and we will contact you as soon as possible.
- We are communicating with families to make cemetery and burial arrangements solely via phone or email. This is in order to limit in-person meetings as much as possible, and reserve these interactions for burials.

We understand that these changes are difficult and we appreciate the trust that you place in us. We invite family members back to visit the grave and place flowers after the burial has been completed, and to observe the required physical distancing measures. We will continue to closely monitor the situation and take actions necessary to help keep our staff and our community safe while providing the services you need during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

The Metro Historic Cemeteries team