

Step-by-Step Do-It-Yourself Funeral

To do BEFORE a death:

- 1) Fill out a Funeral Planning Form www.utahfunerals.org Click on “Plan Ahead”
- 2) Designate a **family member or friend** to act as the Dispositioner (see Advanced Directives page at UtahFunerals.org for [Agent to Control Disposition Form.pdf](#) when the very next-of-kin is not carrying out the disposition). The Dispositioner: goes to the Health Department to apply for a death certificate and Medical Examiner’s permit and drives the vehicle that will bring the body to the place of final disposition (cemetery or crematory). The dispositioner should be your most determined, focused friend or family member instead of the tempting offers of well-meaning professionals.
- 3) **Call the office of Vital Records**, located at the Health Dept of the county where the death will most likely occur (MAKE NOTE OF THEIR OPEN HOURS! Not all are open daily. Often there is more than one branch in each county, with different open-hours). Let the Registrar there know that a Dispositioner plans to “File a Death Record” (so the office is prepared for a possible weekend/after-hours filing).
- 4) Go to the State website <https://vitalrecords.health.utah.gov/death> to print out the Death Record Form. You don’t want to wait to start filling it out. It helps you gather the information for the death certificate that the registrar will need.
- 5) Acquire a **casket**: Build one, buy one or delegate someone else to do so.
- 6) **Call a cemetery** or crematory to let them know family will be acting as the Dispositioner. The Sextant should inform you of any cemetery rules you must comply with. If you prefer burial in a **non-commercial or rural cemetery**, get permission from a contact person for that cemetery. For a list of those in Utah go to <https://history.utah.gov/cemeteries/> click on “find a cemetery”.

If you prefer burial on **your own private rural property** there are no State regulations in Utah but there may be county ordinances (there are no cities that allow burial within city limits). For more details download the **Utah chapter** of laws at www.Funerals.org, click on “Bookstore” or email FCAofUtah@gmail.com for some guidelines.

- 7) If a program is desired for a Funeral or Memorial service there are lots of templates online. You can write it up and insert pictures beforehand (leaving the date of death blank)
- 8) **Gather items to take care of a body** after death. A dead body is treated with the same modesty as any live person who is bed-ridden. How-to move a body, preventing seepage of body fluids and other logistics: <http://www.homefuneralalliance.org/home-funerals.html> (scroll down to “practical information”) and here: <http://www.crossings.net/resources.html> In the 1st paragraph follow the link “**to view a free summary on home funeral care.**”
Also YouTube videos by CINDEA: [Moving the Body](#) (3min), [Part 2 — Washing the Head, Face, and Mouth \(11min\)](#), [Part 3 — Washing the Body](#) (9min, the body should be draped modestly as you would a live bedridden person, but they didn’t for the video), [Part 4 — Dressing the Body](#) (6min includes closing eyes & mouth), [Part 5 — Final Preparations](#) (8min includes casketing or wrapping in a shroud)

In reading/watching those primers remember you don’t have to do things you find uncomfortable. You can alter instructions to fit your need. Find a thick cardboard tube to help the casket slide easily in/out of a vehicle.

Within a couple hours of death there are marked signs of stiffening of the body, called rigor mortis. So you want to close the eyes, mouth, dress the body if desired and decide where the hands will be within the 1st couple hrs. After 24 hrs the muscles begin to relax again (which is a sign of decomposition). Keeping the body cool slows down these processes.

- You may need 16 lbs **per day** of dry ice to keep an average adult at about 40 degrees. Dry ice is purchased at most grocery stores. Using thick gloves, wrap the dry ice in a **paper bag** then **cloth** and place under the body... The room must be ventilated because of the carbon dioxide dry ice releases.

Another option is re-freezable ice packs.

When the temp outside is below 40 degrees, an open window in a separate room may substitute for dry ice.

- 9) **Find out if the doctor** who will likely certify the cause of death (the doctor the dying person saw within the last 30 days) is on the Electronic Death Entry Network (EDEN). Doctors have 3 days to sign, but you can't move the body until you have a death certificate, so if the Doctor is on EDEN it can be faster to get his signature.
- 10) Figure how to cover costs. We recommend a POD (Pay on death) savings account (payable to your chosen dispositioner) so they will have money to carry out funeral plans at the time of death.

To do AFTER a death:

- 1) When an Expected Death occurs: at home is the best situation- Call the Hospice you are working with or the attending physician if seen within 30 days, otherwise call the non-emergency phone # of your local law enforcement agency. Hospital death: Let the Doctor and nurses know asap (even before death) that you will NOT be using a funeral director. You will need to get the Death Certificate and Medical Examiners' Permit at the Health Dept, office of vital records in the county where death occurred BEFORE moving the body.
If Unexpected death occurs call emergency law enforcement. If you are not sure if the person is dead call 911 for an ambulance.

- 2) **Go to** the Vital Records office of **the health department** of the county where death occurred. If you haven't started to fill out the form yet, go to the State website <https://vitalrecords.health.utah.gov/death> to finish that now. Bring with you:
 - 1) The completed Death Record Form
 - 2) Your i.d. (you are the "Dispositioner")
 - 3) The ability to pay \$300-\$600 (**Death Certificate data entry fee**: most counties \$100 during business hrs (Utah county charges according to how long it takes the registrar to enter the data or \$75, a couple counties don't charge extra (some counties supposedly will charge \$300 for weekend/holiday service), **Medical Examiners permit (includes a transit permit)**: \$207, **1st death certificate**: \$30, **Extra copies** of the Death Cert: \$10),
TIME to get the doctors' signature: Give the doctor a heads up and your cell phone # in case the dr will call to tell you where he/she is. Hopefully the Doctor is on EDEN (Utah's Electronic Death Entry Network so he/she can sign it electronically instead of you going to get the signature and then going back to Vital Records).

You will want the death certificate sooner than the legal 5 days because, though a funeral director can transport the body or arrange publication of an obituary; you, **without the D.C. and M.E.'s permit** in hand, cannot do those things.

- 3) **Prepare the body** for casketing (see #8 details in "Before Death" Section).

- 4) **Plan with clergy** (if you desire their participation) & **Secure venues** (even a standard room may be sufficient) for:
 - viewing (the body is visible) or visitation the body is not visible (closed casket, or body not present)
 - funeral (body is present) or memorial (body is not present)
 - Final disposition (burial or cremation). Notify **cemetery or crematory** as far ahead as possible.

- 5) Acquire a **vehicle**: By now you may have received the Death Certificate and Burial Transit Permit needed to move the body. A **van** (with back seats down) or **pick-up truck**, or even an SUV are ideal options for transporting a body in a casket.

- 6) Finalize **Death Notice** (sometimes free) or **Obituary** (typically \$400 to \$1500) and email it to the newspaper with the death certificate. Some papers allow you to publish a minimum obit, adding more words and photos after the funeral for free. Online obits are another option.

- 7) **Veterans' Flag** (www.cem.va.gov) To get one fill out form 27-2008 at: <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/burial-flags/> After death bring it to the post office or Regional VA office to receive the flag. Honorably discharged veterans get free burial at a Veterans National Cemeteries which includes grave, opening and closing, marker, and setting. If the cemetery requires you purchase a grave liner (aka vault) for the casket there are local dealers who will sell it wholesale to those bypassing a funeral home.

- 8) **Delegate** a person to notify friends & family of the finalized place and time of funeral/memorial & disposition. Check for accuracy on address ceremony & cemetery!

- 9) Finalize **Funeral Program**. Find a template online, download, edit & print one. Have a couple people proofread then print the quantity you need.

- 10) Transport to the place of ceremony. Place a table for the casket to rest on (consider weight of casket when choosing a table & need for a tablecloth). You don't need a casket dolly to move the casket through a building (small doorways can be awkward). Pallbearers should practice before people start arriving. A thick cardboard tube helps the casket slide easily in/out of a vehicle.

Utah Funeral Directors are required by their licensure to embalm before they take a body across state lines.

Dispositioners are NOT subject to Licensure Rules! Don't be bullied!

New Jersey requires embalming **if** the body is shipped by common carrier. Several other states require either embalming *or* a sealed casket **if** the body is shipped by common carrier. However, this is rarely enforced and funeral homes in those states will routinely ship unembalmed bodies (Jewish or Muslim clients, for example).

If Death occurs **in** AL, CT, IL, IN, IA, LA, MI, NE, NJ, NY a funeral director will be required on some level (such as simply their presence or filing paperwork). Embalming is only mandated when a body leaves Alabama, Minnesota, or Nebraska.