

The Dreaded Paperwork

Just about the most difficult piece of managing a home funeral is the required paperwork. The best advice is to plan ahead and be prepared! It is not impossible to manage this with a sudden, unexpected death, but your experience will be much less time consuming with some advance planning.

The handling of the arrangements and the paperwork is often an arduous and time consuming task, and it must be done thoroughly and correctly. In order to give the immediate family members more time with the dying person, it can be helpful to enlist a dedicated friend to handle these responsibilities. If so, that person should be designated as the “Authorized Person by a document signed by the dying person or the next of kin. See samples below. **The form must be notarized.**

Things will go more smoothly if, at an early date, the Authorized Person calls on and makes friends with the family physician who will be called when death occurs, and the following officials – to let them know that they will be seeing more of you. Keep them informed of your plans, and notify them as soon as you can at the time of death. While you're talking with them, ask about availability of the official forms for the certificate of death and the medical examiner's permit.

The officials you will need to see are:

- The Clerk of the municipality in the location of the death.
- The Medical Examiner. To find contact information for a medical examiner in your area, call the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner at (207) 624-7180. Have a list of more than one Medical Examiner in your area, and find out their office hours and availability on weekends and holidays.
- Cemetery Official or Crematory Director. Crematories in Maine:

Gracelawn Memorial Park & Crematory - Auburn	782-3741
Mount Hope Cemetery and Crematory - Bangor	945-6589
Brooklawn Memorial Par & Cermatory – Portland	773-7679
Northern Maine Crematory – Presque Isle	764-6478
Laurel Hill Cemetery Associates – Saco	282-9351

Get multiple copies of all required forms in advance, and fill in as much known information as possible in advance – things such as decedent’s name and birth date/place. All the forms must be current State of Maine forms. Copies of the forms may be available at doctor's offices or hospitals. Friendly funeral home directors may also provide them in a pinch if offices are closed. You will need three forms:

1) Certificate of Death:

This is in a sense, the application for the Death Certificate. It can generally be obtained from a doctor’s office or a hospital. It is easier if you have gathered the personal information to fill out the certificate of death in advance. To fill out the Certificate of Death, you'll need to know:

Full name.

Date of death.
Sex.
Social Security number.
Age on last birthday.
Date of birth.
Birthplace.
Was decedent ever in the US Armed Forces?
Place of death.
Marital Status.
Name of most recent spouse.
Decedent's usual occupation (do not use "retired").
The kind of business/industry.
Education.
Ancestry (you can use "American").
Race.
Residence (state, county, city or town, street and number).
Full name of the decedent's father and mother.

They are very picky about this form. **Every box must be filled in – typed or in black ink!** Any box which does not apply or where the information is not available must be filled in with **NA** or **N/A**. If you make a mistake, use correction tape or start over. White-out or cross-outs are not acceptable.

The Authorized Person fills in boxes 28 through 32. **Enter NA in boxes 31b and 32b.**

A physician (or a physician assistant or nurse practitioner, who has knowledge of the deceased's recent medical history or were in charge of the decedent's care) must complete the remainder of the death certificate. **If the paperwork is being done without a funeral director, box 35 must be checked "YES" certifying that the physician (or PA or Nurse Practitioner) viewed the body after death.** Make three photocopies of the completed form (you'll keep one for your records).

If the Medical Examiner's Release form is needed (see number 2 below) get that form signed now, and make two copies (again, you'll keep one).

Take the completed forms with copies, to the town or city clerk's office that is **located in the place of death.**

Upon filing the Certificate of Death, the clerk will provide a certified Death Certificate. You will need several copies – for banks, insurance companies, Social Security, veteran's benefits, etc. In this initial request, the first copy will cost \$10/piece, additional ones \$5. Get as many as you need, as when requesting copies later, each will cost \$10.

2) Medical Examiner's Release of Human Remains:

This form is not needed if the body is to be buried. It is required only when the body is to be cremated, donated, buried at sea, or shipped out of state. This form has only four boxes for you to fill in. In order to sign the form, the medical examiner will need the (application for a) death

certificate (number 1 above) which has been completed, except for the "Registrar's Signature." There is a \$15 charge for this form, payable to the Medical Examiner.

3) Permit for the Disposition of Human Remains:

The municipal clerk's office will have copies of this form. Fill in boxes 1 through 9, which will be easy to do after you've done the death certificate. The clerk will sign the form, keep one of the four parts, and return the other three parts. An official person at the disposition location (cemetery, crematory, etc.) will sign the form. Within seven days, you must return the completed form to the clerk's office where you got it.

**Finally - Keep a copy of all completed forms for your records –
in case there are questions later!**

Note about cremation: There is a 48 hour waiting period in Maine before a body can be cremated. There should be no problem if the body is kept cool i.e. not in a heated room and by using the frozen gel packs or dry ice if the weather is warm. Dry ice cannot be used if body is being transported across state lines. Dry ice is available from: Elm Ice Company, 56 Gray Road, Falmouth, ME 797-5691; Getchell Brothers Inc, 1 Union St., Brewer, ME 989-7335; and P. Gagnon and Son, 200 Main St., York, ME 384-2213. You'll need about 25 pounds of dry ice per day.

Note about transporting a body: The body must be in a "suitable container" i.e. a rigid, closed, combustible container. The body can be in clothing or a shroud, but not in a canvas or plastic bag. Click here for more information on suitable containers and where to get them [go to Chuck's page with links to other local sites/sources.] Pace makers or non-combustible items (jewelry and other metal, glass etc.) must be removed before cremation. An authorization form for cremation by next of kin is usually required, and will be provided by the crematory.

Need Help?

People in Maine who have done this and are willing to advise and assist:

Julia Huttle (Poland, ME) juliahuttle@michaelzorn.com

Sandy Yakovenko (Tenants Harbor, ME) gypsystargazer126@yahoo.com

Klara Tammany (Auburn, ME) ktammany@megalink.net

(Form for a person, in anticipation of death, who has no immediate family members able and available to make final arrangements)

AUTHORIZATION

Having no members of my immediate family to handle the final arrangements after my death, I hereby authorize (name and address of person) to make all necessary arrangements for my final disposition (i.e. burial, donation or cremation) after my death.

(Date of authorization)

(Signature of authorizer)

(Date)

State of Maine
County of _____

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this date by (signature of authorizer).

(Signature of Notary)

(Form for use by a member of the immediate family of the person for whom final arrangements are to be made)

AUTHORIZATION

As a member of the immediate family of (name of person), I hereby authorize (name and address of person authorized to make arrangements) to act on my behalf in making all necessary arrangements for the final disposition (i.e. burial, donation or cremation) of said (name of person). I certify that neither I nor any other member of the immediate family of (name of person) is willing to assume this responsibility.

(Date)

(Signature of authorizer)

(Date)

State of Maine
County of _____

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me on this date by (name of authorizer).

(Signature of notary)