

The Dreaded Paperwork

Plan ahead and be prepared

*These instructions apply to the State of Maine. For other states, look at Lisa Carlson's book *Caring for the Dead: Your Final Act of Love* (Hinesburg, VT: Upper Access Books, 1998). Also, look at the Funeral Consumers Alliance website (www.funerals.org) for contact information for the local affiliate and much more helpful information.*

The paperwork can be the most difficult part of a home funeral, but only if you haven't prepared yourself. Here's help:

In order to give you or other 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 an "Authorized Person" by a document signed by the dying person or the next of kin. See sample form at the bottom of this page. The form must be notarized.

Things will go more smoothly if the Next-of-Kin or Authorized Person contacts the medical professional who will be called when death occurs and the officials listed below, to inform them of your intentions. Many may not be familiar with home funerals, so advance notice will give them time to prepare. 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 Medical Examiner, unless the body is to be buried. To find contact information for a medical examiner in your area, call the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner at (207) 622-7180. Have a list of more than one Medical Examiner in your area, and find out their office hours and availability on weekends and holidays.
- The Clerk of the municipality in the place of death.
- Cemetery Official or Crematory Director.

Here's a list of the crematories in Maine:

- (Auburn) Gracelawn Memorial Park & Crematory - 782-3741
- (Bangor) Mount Hope Cemetery and Crematory - 945-6589
- (Belfast) Maine Coast Crematory - 866-338-9199
- (Freeport) Lighthouse Crematory - 865-5500
- (Portland) Brooklawn Memorial Park & Crematory - 773-7679
- (Presque Isle) Northern Maine Crematory - 764-6478
- (Saco) Laurel Hill Cemetery Associates - 282-9351

These are the forms you need to have:

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 Next-of-Kin or 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 a photocopy of the completed form for your records.

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 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.

Take the completed form(s) with copies to the town or city clerk's office that is located in the place of death. The clerk will provide the certified Death Certificate. You will need multiple copies - for banks, insurance companies, Social Security, veteran's benefits, etc. Experienced people suggest that you send a copy to the three credit report companies (Experian, Equifax and Transunion). In this initial request, the first copy will cost \$10, additional ones \$5 each. Get as many as you need, as when requesting copies later, each will cost \$10.

The clerk will also issue the other form you need:

3) Permit for the Disposition of Human Remains:

The municipal clerk's office will have copies of this form. There are only nine boxes to fill in. The clerk will sign the form and keep a copy. This form gives you official permission to transport a body. You'll make three copies. An official person at the disposition location (cemetery, crematory, etc.) will sign the form and keep a copy. Within seven days, you must return a copy of the completed form to the clerk's office where you got it. The third copy is for your records.

See? That's not hard!

State regulation about transporting a body: "Dead bodies shall be transported in private vehicles only by authorized persons and shall be enclosed in a suitable container made for that purpose which shall be concealed from public view."

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

- Julia Huttel (Poland, ME) juliahuttle@gmail.com
- Sandy Yakovenko (Tenants Harbor, ME) gypsystargazer126@yahoo.com
- Klara Tammany (Auburn, ME) ktammany@megalink.net
- Joe Yugas (Biddeford, ME) folk44@aol.com 283-4487
- Glenda Erickson juliahuttle@gmail.com
- Laurie Dobson lauriegdobson@yahoo.com
- Mark Brandhorst Mark.Brandhorst@gmail.com
- Bradford Purdy bradfordpurdy@gmail.com

Sample Authorization Forms

Form for a person, in anticipation of death, who has no immediate family members able and available to make final arrangements. Copy and paste this sample into a Word document and fill in the appropriate places.

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. Copy and paste this sample into a Word document and fill in the appropriate places.

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 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)_____