

Handling and Transportation of Bodies

The local health department occasionally receives inquiries regarding the handling and transportation of human remains. **The NC Administrative Code (10A NCAC 41A.0212)** addresses several specific concerns pertaining to communicable disease control measures.

1) Handling of a body known to be or reasonably suspected to be infected with smallpox, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) or plague

The body should not be removed from the hospital, home or other place of death until it has been placed in a strong, tightly sealed outer case to prevent any leakage of body fluids. The case is not to be reopened without the consent of the local health director. Additionally, these bodies are not to be embalmed. Cremation is allowed.

2) Individual known to be infected with Creutzfeldt - Jakob disease (CJD)

This body can be safely transported utilizing standard infection control measures. Written information regarding blood and body fluid precautions should be provided to individuals who may be handling the body. Prior to moving the body, the use of a leak-proof bag is recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). If the individual has been autopsied, the family should be advised that although an open casket is allowed, they should avoid even superficial contact with the body. Additional CDC recommendations for funeral home, cemetery and crematory practitioners may be accessed at: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/cjd/funeral_directors.htm.

3) Body of any person known to be infected with HIV, plague, or hepatitis B, or who is known or reasonably suspected to be infected with smallpox, rabies, SARS, or Creutzfeldt-Jacob

At the time the body is removed from the facility, written notice of precautions to prevent infection should be provided to funeral personnel and any other persons who will be handling the body. This is the duty of the attending physician. Example: Observe blood and body fluid precautions.

4) Transportation of bodies across state lines

The funeral director or person acting as such who first assumes custody of the body or fetus which is under the jurisdiction of the medical examiner shall obtain a burial-transit permit signed by the medical examiner prior to final disposition or removal from the State within five days after death. Additionally, any dead body brought into the state must have a burial-transit or disposal permit issued from the state in which the death or disinterment occurred (refer to **NC General Statute 130A-113**).

5) Additional resource for questions related to handling and transportation of bodies

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