



CITY OF CAPE TOWN
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City of Cape Town Covid-19 Fatality Management

June 2020

This document is published on the City of Cape Town website at
www.capetown.gov.za/coronavirus

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Latest Data.....	2
Summary of applicable Regulations.....	3
What to do in the event of a death in the home due to Covid-19?.....	3
Some FAQs	4
What burial capacity does the City have at present?	4
Are Covid-19 burials limited to certain cemeteries or cemetery blocks?.....	4
How long are you allowed to have a burial ceremony at the grave site?.....	4
How many people are allowed to be at the grave site during a burial?	4
Are people allowed to attend the burial of a person that died of Covid-19?.....	4
Will families be permitted to view the body of the deceased prior to burial?	4
What infrastructure does the municipality have in place to accommodate cremations?	4
Have there been any cemeteries or crematoria closed due to staff testing positive for Covid-19?	5
Contact details.....	5
Conclusion.....	5

Introduction

The City of Cape Town is committed to keeping residents informed during the Covid-19 pandemic, as it relates to their health and well-being.

It is our duty as a caring City to ensure that residents are able to give their loved ones a dignified send off, while ensuring compliance with national regulations around burials and cremations during the pandemic.

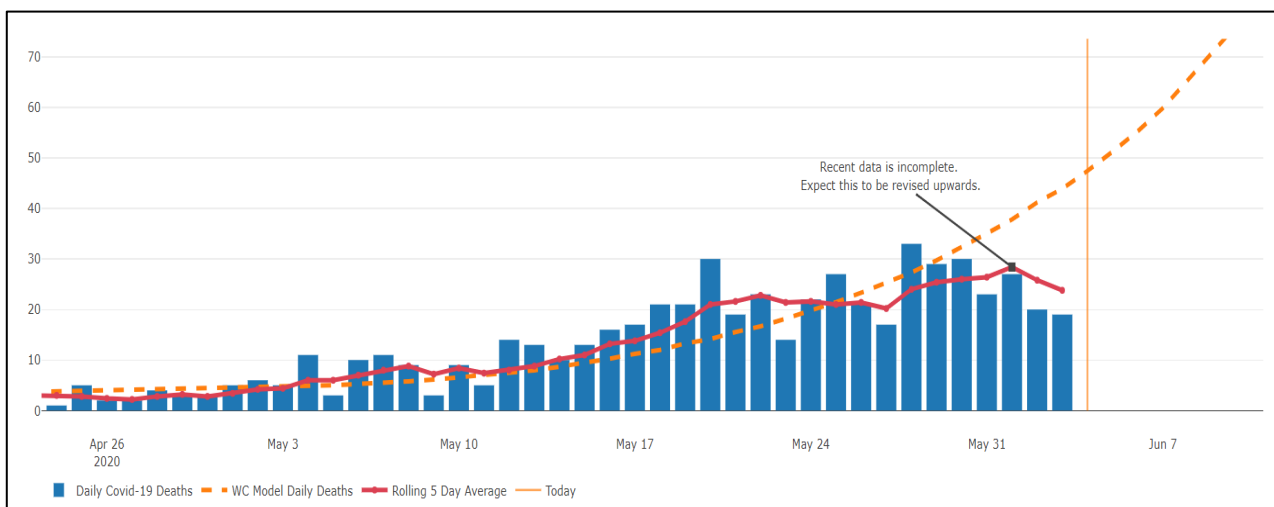
We understand that this is a time that is filled with anxiety and uncertainty for many, and we will do everything possible to keep our residents informed. We are working closely, not only with private sector stakeholders and religious leaders, but also with other governmental bodies including the Western Cape Provincial Government and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. We are all in this together.

Latest Data

As has been communicated by the various Health stakeholders, the Western Cape accounts for 65% of the national Covid-19 caseload, and just over 70% of the fatalities recorded thus far.

Unfortunately, it is expected that fatalities will continue to increase, which in turn will put additional pressure on our cemeteries and crematoria and which may require a change in how funerals are managed.

The graph below shows the Western Cape's daily fatalities, 5-day rolling average and a 7-day forecast based on a provincial model that is being continually updated. The lower numbers over the last few days do NOT reflect fewer deaths – this is simply due to lag-time being experienced in reporting.



Summary of applicable Regulations

National Government is continuing to provide guidance in the form of regulations around treatment of deceased persons and funerals. Currently, the following regulations are in place:

1. Remains of a Covid-19 patient may **only** be transported in public if:
 - o placed in a polythene bag,
 - o sealed in an airtight container,
 - o placed in a sturdy non-transparent sealed coffin,
 - o embalmed and covered with a 5 cm layer of sawdust which is treated with a disinfectant.
2. A medical practitioner must declare in writing that the conveyance of the remains will not constitute a health hazard.
3. The vehicle used must be designated and certified to transport remains.
4. If the deceased did **not** die of an infectious disease, the remains must be accompanied by a certificate to that effect, issued by a medical practitioner or forensic pathologist.
5. Cremation is highly recommended, but in the event of a burial the accompanying service may not last longer than **2 hours**, with only immediate family members present – Covid-19 patients **may not** attend.
6. Funeral services may be held – but a maximum of **50** attendees is permitted.

What to do in the event of a death in the home due to Covid-19?

At **no** stage should anyone in your household touch or handle the body.

Follow the below steps to initiate the fatality management process:

Step 1: Call SAPS (10111), Emergency Medical Services (10177) and your family undertaker.

Step 2: Inform these parties of the death and the circumstances – be sure to advise them of the deceased's Covid-19 status.

Step 3: Handle any of the deceased's belongings with gloves and clean with a detergent, then disinfect with a solution of at least 70% ethanol or 0,01% bleach.

Step 4: Machine wash any clothing or fabric belonging to the deceased with warm water at 60-90 degrees and laundry detergent. If machine washing is not possible, linens can be soaked in hot water and soap in a large drum using a stick to stir, avoiding splashing. The drum should then be emptied, and the linens soaked in 0.05% chlorine for approximately 30 minutes, rinsed in clean water and allowed to dry in full sunlight.

Step 5: Follow up with your undertaker to instruct on burial or cremation.

Step 6: Submit necessary information to your undertaker for the Death Certificate application (DHA-1663) from Home Affairs

Some FAQs

What burial capacity does the City have at present?

The City of Cape Town has 40 public cemeteries, of which only 16 cemeteries are still actively used for burials. Out of these active cemeteries many have reached full capacity and only accommodate burials in private family graves as second on-top burials. There are however 5 cemeteries with longer term burial opportunities which at the current burial demand are projected to be sufficient for the next 5 years.

Are Covid-19 burials limited to certain cemeteries or cemetery blocks?

No – there is currently no reason to think that Covid-19 burials need to be conducted separately. The City will continue to make use of all available cemetery resources as per normal at this stage.

How long are you allowed to have a burial ceremony at the grave site?

Only 30 minutes is allowed in the cemetery for each burial.

How many people are allowed to be at the grave site during a burial?

Undertakers must ensure that the family adheres to the restriction of a maximum of 50 people permitted to attend each burial. This total includes the priest, family members, undertaker staff and guests.

Are people allowed to attend the burial of a person that died of Covid-19?

Yes – but Covid-19 patients are not permitted to attend any burials or funeral ceremonies. Hand shaking, hugging and kissing must be avoided. Hand sanitizing should be done as frequently as possible and provided for by undertakers or family members.

Will families be permitted to view the body of the deceased prior to burial?

Yes – once in the hospital or mortuary, the body bag containing a deceased may be viewed by family members, one at a time and wearing masks and gloves. Bodies may NOT be viewed in a home environment.

What infrastructure does the municipality have in place to accommodate cremations?

The City owns Maitland Crematorium, while there are several privately owned crematoriums within the Western Cape Province, including the Durbanville Private Crematorium. There are 3 other crematoriums within the Western Cape Province in George, Paarl and Worcester, all of which are privately owned.

Have there been any cemeteries or crematoria closed due to staff testing positive for Covid-19?

No City owned or managed facilities to date. Please visit watch the media, follow us on social media or visit our website for up-to-date information.

- City of Cape Town Facebook at www.facebook.com/CityofCT
- Follow us on Twitter at [@CityofCTAlerts](https://twitter.com/CityofCTAlerts) for daily service delivery updates
- City of Cape Town website at www.capetown.gov.za/coronavirus

Contact details

Losing a loved one is a devastating experience, made all the more difficult by the stringent regulations necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. A number of organisations are available to assist residents with bereavement counselling during this time, if need be:

- Cape Mental Health Centre: [021 447 9040](tel:0214479040)
- FAMSA Western Cape: [021 447 7951](tel:0214477951)
- SA Depression and Anxiety Group: [0800 456 789](tel:0800456789) / SMS [31393](tel:31393)
- Khululeka Grief Support: [021 685 1128](tel:0216851128)

The City of Cape Town publishes information daily in the media, on our website and on our social media channels. Follow us for up-to-date information.

- City of Cape Town Facebook at www.facebook.com/CityofCT
- Follow us on Twitter at [@CityofCTAlerts](https://twitter.com/CityofCTAlerts) for daily service delivery updates
- City of Cape Town website at www.capetown.gov.za/coronavirus

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on countries around the world. The City of Cape Town is committed to playing its part to ensure that we can reduce the spread of the virus in our communities, and that those who do fall ill have the best possible outcome.

It is however a reality that there are many residents who are extremely vulnerable to severe illness and death as a result of the virus, and so we need to be as prepared as possible to deal with the worst-case scenario in a dignified manner for the victims and their families.

This will be the first of many communiques from the City of Cape Town on Fatality Management. We hope to be able to keep you informed and aware of how this crisis progresses.

We urge families who are burying loved ones to book their burials on WEEKDAYS and as soon as possible in order to ease congestion on weekends. While we understand that there are traditional or preferred days and venues for burial, it is vital that undertaker associations and cemeteries are not overburdened, and that burials be spread evenly across the whole week.