

# **REPUBLIC OF GHANA**



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## **REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES FOR REGISTRATION AND LICENSING CREMATORIUM SERVICE IN GHANA**

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**MORTUARIES AND FUNERAL FACILITIES AGENCY-MoFFA**

# **Requirements and Guidelines for Registration and Licensing of Crematorium Service in Ghana**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency (MoFFA) is an agency established under the Part Two of the Health Institutions and Facilities Act, 2011 (Act 829) “to license, control and regulate all facilities connected with the storage, transportation and disposal of human remains”.

According to section 57 of Act 829, crematorium means premises fitted with appliances for the purpose of cremating human remains, a place or site used for cremating human remains and anything used in connection with cremation. In Act 829, crematorium is one of the facilities to be registered and licensed by the Agency (Section 43, subsection 2d).

Cremation is an irreversible and final process carried out by placing the remains of the deceased and the container holding the remains into a cremation chamber where they are subjected to intense heat and flame. The heat and flame will incinerate and consume everything except the bones and metal, which are all that will be left after cremation. The cremated remains will be mechanically pulverized into small pieces until no single fragment is recognizable as skeletal tissue and placed in a designated container or urn.

It is expected that owners and operators of crematorium have adequate knowledge and standard procedure on how to handle human remains in the process of cremation. Failure to do so is not only unacceptable but will raise valid public health concerns. Adherence to the requirements and guidelines set out in this document will inspire confidence in this essential component of the Ghana Health System. Many of the requirements relate to the site of the crematorium, construction of funeral pyre, maintenance of privacy, processing, transferring and disposition of cremains.

The purpose of this document therefore is to outline registration requirements and guidelines of crematorium, provide information required to enable an applicant register a crematorium facility and directs what is allowed or not allowed in the operations of cremation in Ghana.

## **2.0 Requirements and Guidelines for Licensing of crematorium.**

In all occasions, reference shall be made to the guidelines for licensing of facilities in addition to all the following requirements and guidelines:

## **2.1 Siting**

- a. No crematorium shall be situated
  - i. Nearer to any dwelling: a house within eight-hundred-meter radius, except with the consent in writing of the owner, lease and occupier of such dwelling.
  - ii. Within fifty meters of any public road.
- b. The site should be approved by the Environmental Protection Authority and Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency

## **2.2 Construction of Funeral Pyre**

- a. The Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency and the Environmental Protection Authority may by notification approve the use of any site within a Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assembly for the construction of funeral pyre for the cremation of human remains if the site is:
  - i. at least 800 meters from the nearest dwelling house and not less than 30 meters from any road
  - ii. not likely to be a nuisance to the environment and the community
  - iii. properly fenced from animals and screened from public view
- b. The Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency may if it deems fit, by notification at any time declare that a site is no longer an authorize site.

## **2.3 Maintenance and Privacy**

- a. A crematorium facility shall be maintained in clean, orderly and sanitary manner with adequate ventilation and shall have temporary storage and available to store human remains pending disposition by cremation, the interior of which shall not be accessible to the general public.
- b. Entrances and windows of the crematorium facility shall be maintained at all times to secure privacy, including:
  - i. doors shall be tightly closed
  - ii. windows shall be covered
  - iii. entrances shall be locked and secured when not actively attended by authorized crematorium personnel.
- c. Routine maintenance shall be carried out on the equipment in the following ways:

- i. Inspect burners and combustion chambers regularly for wear and tear, corrosion or blockages.
- ii. Clean filters, nozzles, air blowers, and ash chambers weekly or as recommended by the manufacturer.  
Ensure refractory linings (heat-resistant interior) are intact — replace any cracked or worn lining.
- iii. Check thermocouples and temperature sensors for accurate readings.
- iv. Schedule professional servicing (annually or bi-annually) for calibration and safety checks.
- d. The facility shall have in place adequate emission (pollution) control systems such as scrubbers and filters, to stay within legal emission limits
- e. Regularly clear soot and residue buildup in the chimney or flue
- f. Disinfect tools and trays after each use.
- g. Use personal protective equipment (PPE) for all staff: gloves, masks, aprons, etc.
- h. Regularly clean floors, prep areas, ash-handling stations, and equipment to prevent contamination and odors.
- i. Maintain records of cremations, maintenance logs, and emissions checks.
- j. Submit reports to environmental or public health authorities as required.
- k. Keep spare parts (burners, sensors, relays) in stock.
- l. Train staff on safe operation, handling of human remains, and emergency procedures (fire, gas leak, etc.).
- m. Conduct refresher training on infection control and respectful handling of remains.
- n. Handle ashes with dignity and in accordance with cultural and religious practices.
- o. Properly dispose of non-combustible materials (e.g., metal implants) via approved recycling or disposal services.

## **2.4 Cremation process**

- a. The crematorium process shall be conducted in privacy. No person except authorized persons shall be admitted into the holding facility or the temporary storage facility while the remains of the deceased human remains are being cremated.
- b. Unless authorized by the Minister for Health or the Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency, no person shall burn a body in or at any place other than a crematorium.
- c. No deceased human remains shall be burned in and at a crematorium unless the facility have been licensed by the Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency.

## **2.5 Identification of deceased human beings**

- a. Identifying deceased individuals before cremation is a critical legal, ethical, and procedural step. Since cremation is irreversible, misidentification can lead to serious legal and emotional consequences. The following provides the guidelines for identifying deceased human remains before cremation:
  - i. No crematorium shall cremate the remains of any deceased human body without the accompanying cremation permit and a cremation authorization form.
  - ii. A family member or authorized representative shall visually confirm the identity of the deceased. This shall be done before the body is placed in the cremation chamber
  - iii. The family member or the authorized person shall sign an identification and authorization form confirming the identity of the deceased body attesting to the permission for the cremation of the deceased. A photo of the family member who signed the document shall be added.
- b. The body shall be tagged with a unique ID number, name, and other identifiers (e.g., mortuary tag).
- c. The tag shall remain attached to the body throughout the process, including transportation and preparation.
- d. A chain-of-custody form shall be used to track the body from the place of death through to cremation.
- e. A heat-resistant metal ID disc or tag with a unique code shall be placed with the body during cremation. The disc remains intact during the process and is returned with the ashes to confirm identity. The number on the disc should match the documentation on file.
- f. Fingerprints or DNA samples may be taken before cremation. This is especially relevant in:
  - i. Unidentified or unclaimed bodies;
  - ii. Legal cases or forensic investigations;
  - iii. Disaster victim identification.
- g. A chain-of-custody form shall be used to track the body from the place of death through to cremation.
- h. The crematorium or funeral director shall verify the following:
  - i. Government-issued ID (e.g., National ID Card)
  - ii. Death certificate

- iii. Medical certificate of cause of death
- iv. Cremation permit (issued by Births and Deaths Registry)
- v. Cremation authorization form (signed by the family member)
- i. Legal & Ethical Considerations shall constitute the following:
  - i. There must be a written authorization from a next of kin or family member
  - ii. The facility must follow strict documentation protocols.
  - iii. Misidentification can result in lawsuits, loss of license, or criminal charges.

## **2.6 Transferring remains**

- a. The remains of a deceased human being to be cremated shall not be removed from the casket or external wrappings in which it was delivered unless explicit, signed authorization is provided by the person making the arrangement.
- b. When the remains of deceased human being is to be transferred to an alternative container, the transfer shall be conducted in privacy with dignity and respect and by the licensed funeral director or authorized representative.

## **2.7 Processing remains**

- a. Upon the completion of the cremation, the interior of the retort shall be thoroughly swept so as to render the retort reasonably free of all matter. The content thereof shall be placed into an individual container and not commingled with other remains. The cremation permit shall be kept by the cremator as part of their records.
- b. A magnet and sieve or other appropriate method of separation may be used to divide the remains from unrecognizable incidental or foreign material.
- c. The remains shall pulverize until no single fragment is recognizable as a skeletal tissue.
- d. The pulverized remains shall be transferred to a sealable container or containers where inside dimension shall be of suitable size to contain the entire remains of the person who was cremated.

## **2.8 Disposition of remains**

- a. Remains must be disposed of by placing them in a grave, crypt, or niche, by scattering them in a designated scatter garden or area, or in any manner whatsoever on the private property of a consenting owner.
- b. Except with the express written permission of the authorizing agent, no person shall:

- i. Dispose of remains in a manner or in a location so that the remains do not commingled.
- ii. Place remains of more than one person in the same temporary container or urn.

## **2.9 Cremation operation certification**

- a. The cremator shall be certified by the Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency.
- b. Proof of certification must be pasted in the crematorium and available at all times.

## **3.0 Requirement for open pyre cremation**

- a. Location/site of the pyre shall be approved by Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency.
- b. Every pyre site established under the Act (Act 829), and every authorized site shall be:
  - i. Maintained in a good working order
  - ii. Provided with a sufficient number of attendants trained to the satisfaction of the Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency.
  - iii. Kept constantly in a clean and orderly condition.
  - iv. Opened to inspection at any reasonable time by any person appointed for such purposes by the Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency.

## **4.0 Granting and Denial of Application Permit**

- i. Cremation permit shall be obtained from the Births and Deaths Registry but the license shall be given by Mortuaries and Funeral Facilities Agency
- ii. No cremation shall be undertaken at a site not approved by MoFFA.

## **5.0 Opening of Container**

- a. The cremator may only open the container holding the un-cremated remains in limited circumstances, such as to confirm the identity of the deceased or to ensure that it does not contain any hazardous materials to employees and public.
- b. If human remains are delivered in a container which is not suitable it will not be accepted. This will be conducted before a witness and done with dignity and respect.

## 6.0 Definition of Terms

Cremation	Means the process of applying extreme heat (temperature up to 1000 degrees Celsius) to the body. During which the body is reduced to cremated remains referred to as ashes.
Crematorium	Means any building fitted with appliances for the purpose of burning human remains, a place or site or site used for cremating human remains and anything used in connection with cremation. Act 829(2011)
Cremains	Means the ashes of a cremated human remains.
Pyre	Means a structure, usually made of wood burning part for a funeral rite.
Open Pyre	Means a form of cremation where a body is placed upon or under a pyre which is then set on fire.
Gas/Electric Method	Means a form of cremation where the dead body is placed in a concealed furnace and reduced to ashes in no time by the use of gas or electricity. The ashes are collected and disposed of according to the individual's or family's wishes or customs.
Pulverize	Means process of reducing the bone fragments that remain after incineration of the body to fine particles
Disposition	Means the process of laying human remains to rest.
Commingled	Means mixing of cremated remains (ashes) from more than one person.