



If observed conscientiously, the following best practices will help funeral directors meet the highest standards of excellence of the funeral service profession.

- **Secure the preparation room** Do you have procedures in place assuring that only trained and authorized personnel enter preparation areas? Never enter preparation areas unless you have received proper training, your vaccinations are up to date and you have selected appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including shoe covers. Don't smoke, eat, drink, apply personal makeup or handle your contact lenses in preparation areas.
- **Evaluate exposure risks** Are there special risks or diseases associated with the procedure you are performing? Universal precautions must always be observed, but they may or may not be sufficient to keep you safe.
- **Know the products you're using** Are you familiar with the newly designed labels, pictogram warnings and newly formatted safety data sheets (SDS) for the products you use? Always retain the current SDS your supplier ships in each new box of chemicals. SDSs for all products you use must be present and readily accessible in the work area. Make sure all containers are labeled properly. Labels and SDSs tell you about the chemicals products contain – how to handle and dispose of them and what to do in case of emergency.
- **Prepare for emergencies** When was the last time your emergency equipment was tested? Know where to find and how to operate drench showers, eyewash stations, fire extinguishers, spill cleanup and all other emergency equipment. Know exactly where your SDSs are located. Post emergency telephone numbers near all phones.
- **Limit toxicity and waste** How much of each product are you using and why? Use only the amount of product needed to ensure that the procedure you're performing is carried out properly. Try to avoid the use of products containing phenol and cresol. Ask your supplier about substitute products that are environmentally friendly. Keep covers on embalming machines. Make sure ventilation systems are clean and running properly. Conduct formaldehyde exposure testing annually. Remember that changes in ventilation, the design of your preparation room or even volume of work can change exposure levels. Testing should be performed immediately following any such changes.
- **Avoid solvents and chlorinated compounds** Are you certain that solvents and chlorinated compounds, such as trichloroethylene (TCE) and perchloroethylene (Perc) – are not going down the drain? Found in some cosmetics, adhesives, tissue builders and cleaning products, these compounds should only be used topically – if used at all. Make sure solvents and chlorinated compounds are never introduced, even in trace amounts, into drains, sinks, embalming tanks or groundwater. Gauze or cotton containing these compounds and residue in empty containers should never be tossed in a dumpster or commingled with other wastes. Check SDSs to determine whether special handling or disposal is required for products containing these compounds.
- **Know how to manage your wastewater** Do you know the composition of your wastewater and the proper disposal practices? Permits and reports may be required. Your disposal system should be sized properly, operated correctly and maintained regularly. Think of the drain as the beginning – not the end – of your sanitary and embalming wastestream. Even the smallest disposal system problems should be investigated and corrected immediately using the services of a trained licensed professional. Remember that funeral home expansion may require wastewater disposal system expansion. Septic tanks must be pumped regularly, no less often than every three years.
- **Handle sharps carefully** Are sharps clean, disinfected and stored safely? Always use appropriate engineering and safety devices for sharps. Syringe caps and scalpel blade removal/disposal devices that do not require manual handling of the blade are a must. Sharps must be discarded in properly designed and labeled containers for contaminated sharps.
- **Think before you flip the switch** Are you being as careful as you should be with power-assisted devices? Always follow manufacturer instructions when using power-assisted equipment.
- **Don't just toss it in the trash** Do you know where to discard recycled materials, biomedical waste, hazardous waste, contaminated PPE and potentially contaminated laundry? Be sure to differentiate among the waste you produce, as different rules apply to different wastes. Appropriate, clearly labeled waste containers must be present in the work area. Use licensed, reputable disposal firms. Know where wastes are being taken for disposal and ask about the compliance status of the disposal facility. Keep copies of all waste disposal receipts. Manifests must be maintained and be ready for inspection.
- **Recycle** Do you have a recycling program? Talk to your supplier about recycling the products you're purchasing and find out about community recycling programs. Don't throw away materials that can and should be recycled.
- **Keep it clean** Are you keeping the work area clean and disinfected? Decontaminate work surfaces immediately if they are overtly contaminated, after any spill and after completing preparation procedures. Wash your hands after every procedure and before you leave the area.
- **Document your work** Do you always complete embalming reports and file them in the business office? Report any and all incidents and/or accidents to your supervisor immediately to initiate appropriate follow-up action.

From the National Funeral Directors Association

The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) has prepared this poster as a reminder of preparation room best practices that are vitally important to protecting safety, health and the environment. It is not, nor is it intended to be, a regulatory compliance poster or legal advice. NFDA offers a variety of other tools specifically designed to help you understand governmental regulations.

NFDA has established and maintains an effective working relationship with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA). The association has taken a leadership role in conducting cutting-edge research and investigations and using the information derived to advocate reasonable, informed governmental decisions about the degree to which funeral service should be regulated. However, the single most important reason NFDA has been able to work productively with these agencies is that protecting the health and safety of the public and the environment in your community is your commitment to your chosen profession.

NFDA hopes that displaying this poster on the door of your preparation room or in your employee gowning area will help you maintain standards of excellence in your funeral home and help the funeral service profession adhere to its longstanding and outstanding record of workplace safety, health and environmental protection.

Call NFDA's toll-free OSHA support line at 800.633.2674 whenever you have questions about best practices in the preparation room. It's just a phone call away, with emergency assistance available 24 hours a day!