

Best Practices: Lynch & Sons' Cremation Protocol

Over the past fifty years, as cremation has grown from an exceptional (less than 5% in 1960) to a normative practice (nearly 50% in 2010), Lynch & Sons have established a distinctive set of best practices to ensure families choosing cremation that their deceased are being treated with the same care and respect as those that are buried. In a culture driven by convenience, cost efficiency and depersonalization, it is important to affirm that families who cremate their dead care just as deeply for them as families who bury theirs. Lynch & Sons take seriously the great trust placed in us in the handling and supervision of the cremation process and believe it is the daily enforcement of our protocols that set us apart from the vast majority of funeral homes and cremation providers. Below you may read in detail exactly what we do when a family asks us to oversee the cremation of their loved one.

If someone you love dies and you are choosing cremation, whether you call upon our services or not, we strongly encourage you to be as scrupulous as possible in your investigation of cremation options and providers. Some *are* better than others. Ask exactly how your loved one will be handled, from the very beginning to the very end of the cremation process. This is a question worth asking and one that we believe demands a thorough answer.

1. Direct transfer from place of death to funeral home

Once given permission to transfer your deceased into our care, we will go immediately to the place of death and then directly back to our funeral home. There will be absolutely no stops in between (e.g. another hospital to retrieve another decedent).

2. Positive identification of the deceased

When death has occurred at a family home or medical facility with family present at the time we make the removal, or if public or family visitation is scheduled, positive identification is not an issue. If, however, no public viewing is going to take place and death occurred and removal made without the family present, we require positive identification be made. The deceased's body will be washed and their features set. The deceased will be placed on a cot, dressed or covered with a sheet, then brought into one of our chapels. At least one family member or a person appointed by the next of kin will then come into our funeral home and view the decedent before cremation takes place.

3. Placement of personal identification disc.

Before the deceased is taken to the crematory, we will place a stainless steel disc with his or her person. This disc, marked with a tracking number we record at the funeral home and at the crematory, is able to survive the entire cremation process. Throughout the entire process, this disc is never separated from your loved one and is therefore returned to you in the same container holding the cremated remains.

4. Cremation by appointment ONLY

After positive identification and tracking protocols have been followed, medical certification of death has been secured and authorizations to cremate have been signed by next of kin and issued by the medical examiner, then and ONLY THEN, will we schedule an appointment with the crematory. Under no circumstances will a decedent be taken to the crematory until all of these protocols have been fulfilled. Furthermore, we will never “drop-off” a decedent at the crematory, placing him or her in line with the rest of the to-be cremated—sometimes as many as 20—who have been handed over to the crematory prematurely while the proper authorizations are still being processed.

5. Personal witness of cremation commencement

Because all of our cremations are by appointment, as soon as we get to the crematory, we present the crematory operators with the necessary authorizations, and then immediately help them place the decedent into the retort, close the retort door, and begin the cremation process itself. We have found that an increasing number of families choose to accompany us to the crematory to personally witness these procedures. This is something we encourage and are always pleased to accommodate. If this is not your personal preference, however, before we close the retort door, we will take a photo of your loved one’s container in the retort labeled with his or her name, date of birth and death, and the date of the cremation.

6. Retrieval of cremated remains ONLY

Once the cremation is complete and the cremated remains have been properly processed at the crematory, we will personally retrieve your loved one’s cremated remains from the crematory and bring them directly to the funeral home or place of disposition (e.g. cemetery or church columbarium). We do not allow the crematory operators to put your loved one’s cremated remains in a delivery van alongside many other sets of cremated remains and drive around making deliveries to various funeral homes. As is our policy with the initial transfer of a decedent, we go personally and there will be absolutely no stops in between (e.g. to retrieve or deliver another set of cremated remains).

7. Signed release of cremated remains

After all of these best practices have been enforced and we have your decedent’s cremated remains once again in our possession, we will only return them to the next of kin or the individual appointed by the next of kin. This transfer of cremated remains must be accompanied by a signed release/receipt, indicating the transfer of custody.

8. Assistance and counsel on further methods of final disposition and commemoration.

As with families who bury their dead, Lynch & Sons are able to assist those who cremate with all suitable methods of further disposition including burial of ashes in a family lot, entombment in a columbarium, division and distribution of ashes, scattering of ashes, and other methods of disposition and memorialization.