



Certified Green Cemetery

## General Background



Natural Path Sanctuary (NPS) was opened in June 2011 as a nature preserve/green burial ground with an educational facet that focuses on promoting sustainable end-of-life practices and final disposition choices. Certified by the [Green Burial Council](#), NPS offers natural burials as an alternative to more conventional options, becoming the first green cemetery in Dane County and one of only a few in the country at the time it was founded.

Our purpose is to promote a legacy of care and respect for the earth by offering natural burials that preserve and protect the natural beauty of the land in life and in death. We are committed to family and community friendly burials that have the least impact on the environment as possible. Embalming is not permitted due to the toxic properties of traditional methods. All burials are in biodegradable containers such as natural fiber shrouds, blankets, or bare wood caskets, without metal or precious preserved wood. Cremains are permitted in biodegradable urns with considerations for the high energy demand of cremation. All graves are dug by hand, not machines.

Natural Path Sanctuary is one of three primary components of the Farley Center for Peace, Justice, and Sustainability, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting sustainability, justice, and peace. It is located just outside of Verona, Wisconsin, in the Town of Springdale on 108 beautiful acres of farm and wooded land (15 minutes from Madison). The cemetery now encompasses 25 acres of woods and meadows that include a pond, rocky ridges, and mowed paths that allow for easy walking. Currently 12.5 acres are actively being used for burials.



Natural Path Sanctuary is designated as a 501(c)(13) nonprofit cemetery and is the only green burial ground in the world helping to support a collaborative farm program and peace and justice initiatives. Legacy Donations go towards continuing the values and activities of the Farley Center and ongoing maintenance of the cemetery. In addition to the cemetery, you'll find more meadows and woodlands, an array of cultivated gardens, orchards, farm buildings, land art and sculpture installations, a small pond, council circle, and even an apiary.

## Helpful Information Related to Burial at Natural Path Sanctuary

Depending on circumstances, the period between the moment of death and time of burial can vary from a few days to a few weeks or longer. Variables such as the cause of death, the place where death occurs, condition of the body, cultural or religious practices, whether cremation is involved, scheduling of funeral events, as well as other factors, all come into play when arranging a burial.

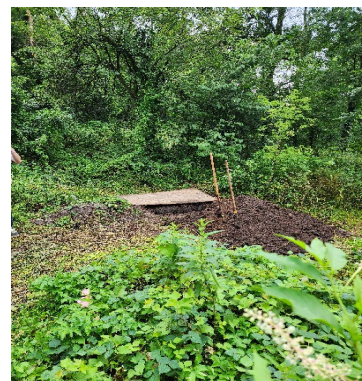


To ease the burden on those responsible for making final arrangements at the time of death, we encourage you to plan ahead as best you can. At Natural Path Sanctuary (NPS), individual grave plots may be purchased years in advance from the date of actual burial. Other important decisions about the final disposition of your body (e.g. full-body burial or cremation), the funeral home you'd like to use (or not), the burial container or covering you prefer, pre-burial services, and assigning a personal representative responsible for implementing your plan can all be made sooner rather than later.



Of course, there are circumstances where pre-planning is not possible. When death is sudden and unexpected or occurs in a distant location far from NPS, there are likely to be additional steps necessary that will be supported by guidance from any officials involved (e.g. medical examiner or coroner), as well as other funeral professionals who might assist in the process.

To help make your experience with NPS as positive as possible, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the general information that follows and then keep this information on hand for easy access when needed. And please feel free to contact us at any time should you have questions or concerns.





## Rules and Regulations

### ***Embalming:***

Given the toxic nature of embalming fluid (even those promoted as more eco-friendly), NPS does not accept bodies that have been embalmed. **Therefore, it is important that funeral directors and morticians are instructed *not* to use any type of embalming fluids (including “green” embalming fluid),** but rather to use alternatives such as refrigeration or dry ice to help preserve the body before burial. In Wisconsin, there are no laws or regulations requiring embalming.

### ***Outer burial containers and liners:***

Vaults and similar outer containers are inconsistent with green burial and are not permitted at NPS. State law does not require a grave liner or burial vault.

### ***Biodegradable containers and coverings:***

All burials shall be made in biodegradable containers such as natural-fiber shrouds or blankets, bare wood caskets, urns, and cremains-grade cardboard boxes. Shrouds, blankets or drapes are preferred because they require less disruption of the soil and root systems where the burial takes place. Caskets can be made only with wood that biodegrades easily. Some types of wood such as cedar, black locust, redwood, are decay resistant and therefore not suitable. No finishes (oil, lacquers, polyurethane, etc.) of any kind are allowed. All casket liners, if applicable, must be of **ONLY** natural fiber, biodegradable material. No metal of any kind may be used to decorate the casket. Screws, nails, or other fasteners must be plain steel (stainless and galvanized are not allowed). Containers shall be constructed of sufficient strength to support the weight of an adult body. All containers must be pre-approved. Clothing and other items to be buried must also comply with these specifications. Please note that a \$500 additional fee will be added to any casket burial. Funeral homes generally offer some models of natural burial containers including shrouds and caskets. An internet search will also provide you with options for containers that meet biodegradability standards. A list of possible sources for purchasing shrouds and other biodegradable containers can be found on the Helpful Resources page at the end of this document.

### ***Cremated Remains:***

We do accept cremated remains (aka cremains or ashes), however, we ask that you consider the energy demand of cremation while comparing burial vs. cremation options. If the cremains are buried in an urn, all urns must be biodegradable. Burial and scattering of cremains will be allowed in designated parts of NPS burial grounds and will be documented and recorded in the same manner as any burial. Note that Wisconsin law requires a minimum 48-hour wait period after a person dies before cremation can be performed.

### **Grave Markers:**

In keeping with the understanding that the grave sites will return to their natural state, many families will choose not to have a grave marker of any sort. Some families may choose a simple log or flat field stone as a marker. While engraved permanent stone markers are allowed—all stones must be “shaped by nature” (no cutting, grinding, shaping, polishing, etc.), and installed flush to the ground so that only the top surface is exposed. Grave markers must meet our established size limitation of a maximum of 216 sq. inches and no more than 24 inches in one dimension. All marker costs are the family’s responsibility. **All markers must meet the prior approval of NPS staff, and NPS staff are required to assist in the placement of the marker. Contact NPS staff before creating or purchasing a marker to make sure that it complies with the cemetery’s regulations.** An electronic record and map of the exact burial site is maintained at the NPS office. Family can access the computerized map and records kept at the NPS office.

### **Planting of flowers, plants, shrubs, seeds, and trees:**

Natural Path Sanctuary is a nature preserve, and to protect and preserve the environmental integrity of this space, **we ask that cemetery visitors DO NOT, under any circumstances, place flowers, decorative plants, shrubs, trees, bulbs, seeds, soil, leaf chip, or bark mulch, without the express permission from the cemetery staff.** Permission will only be granted for species native to this part of Wisconsin from a list provided by NPS, within the limits of existing flora. Because invasive organisms (*i.e., jumping worms, garlic mustard, and other unwanted pests and seeds*) may be present in the soil of the root ball, **only plants purchased from an NPS approved nursery will be allowed.** Trees and shrubs that are planted at the family’s request require a \$750 maintenance fee. Generally, the plant growth on the grave site will return to its natural state.

### **Floral tributes and decorations:**

In keeping with preserving the natural environment, floral tributes and other objects must be removed after the completion of burial services. Biodegradable religious identifiers may be buried with the individual’s body. Religious and other information may be kept in the NPS computer system that keeps a record of the individuals buried here.

### **Benches:**

Benches may not be placed in the cemetery without first securing the cemetery’s permission. Permission will only be granted for benches that meet our requirements. A placement fee of \$500 is required. Please call or email for details.

### **Arranging for gatherings before, during, and after burial:**

Due to conditions established by the Town of Springdale, we can only have family and friend-based burials with no large funeral services, and attendance limited to a 20-vehicle parking limit. No parking is allowed along Spring Rose Road.

---

*We hope that these regulations are seen as reasonable. They are based on our mutual desire that people buried here will be a part of the natural path of life and death buried amongst the trees and the plants, contributing to the sustainability of the nature preserve.*

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Who We Are and How We Operate

### ***What is the difference between NPS and Funeral Home?***

Natural Path Sanctuary (NPS) is designated solely as a cemetery/burial ground and is not in itself, or in affiliation, a funeral home or mortuary. As such, we

- do not employ licensed funeral directors/morticians or others such as social workers, or unlicensed after-death care educators and home-funeral guides who may be involved in the various activities that need attention after a person dies,
- cannot provide shelter for a body between the time of death and burial, nor are we able to prepare a body for burial,
- do not provide burial containers or coverings,
- are not able to arrange vigils/wakes/viewings or other formal funeral services prior to burial,
- do not provide any transportation of bodies.

Typically, the activities listed above involve a local licensed funeral director or funeral home of one's choice. Fees for such services and related products are separate from and additional to those charged by NPS. In many cases, especially when death is expected and occurs in a hospital, a nursing home, or under hospice care, arrangements can be made in advance. Then, when death occurs, it takes only a simple phone call to one's preferred funeral home to start the pre-burial process. When death is sudden and unexpected, or occurs in a distant location from NPS, additional steps must be considered.

There are those who may wish to hold a home funeral (sometimes called a family-directed funeral or home-based funeral), which allows for after-death care to be conducted by family or friends, and for keeping the deceased at home prior to burial or cremation. If you are considering a home funeral, you are encouraged to research what is involved in preparing a body at home for burial or cremation, and to explore this alternative with a home-funeral consultant before making this choice. There are numerous resources available to help you learn about these alternative approaches, some of which are listed further along in this packet.

### ***What are the most common tasks that need attention between the time of death and burial?***

- Choosing and notifying a funeral home to arrange for transportation from place of death to where the body will be cared for until burial,
- Alerting NPS staff that a death has occurred so that preparations for burial can begin,
- Working with the funeral home to choose a preferred biodegradable burial container/covering and to select other services they may offer,

- Scheduling the date/time of burial (coordinated between the funeral home and NPS),
- Filling out paperwork,
- Writing obituaries, notifying family and friends, and arranging gatherings such as a viewing/visitation, memorial service, reception, which are separate from the burial event itself.

### ***How are gravesites purchased at NPS?***

Purchasing a gravesite at NPS is an easy two-step process which includes filling out two agreement forms and the payment of fees associated with each. This can be done before or after a death occurs, however gravesite purchases are often made years in advance. Note the two agreements below are made to different entities and can be done at different times.

1. Completion of a **Legacy Donation/Pledge Agreement** and remittance of \$3,000, payable to The Farley Center for Peace, Justice, and Sustainability. This is required before a burial right purchase can be made.
2. Completion **Burial Right Purchase Agreement** and remittance of either \$1,500 for a full-body burial or \$1,000 for burial of cremated remains, payable to Natural Path Sanctuary.

To purchase a gravesite, most people meet face-to-face with the NPS Cemetery Director who will explain our process and answer any questions before filling out the paperwork and making payment. Often this type of meeting includes a tour of the cemetery grounds. If an on-site meeting is not possible, arrangements can be made using Zoom or phone. To reach the NPS director and schedule a meeting, please call (608) 845-8724 or email, [nps@farleycenter.org](mailto:nps@farleycenter.org).

### ***Are there any other fees associated with burial at NPS?***

- \$500 for casket/container burial
- \$500 for weekend burial

Other expenses related to services not available through NPS (such as funeral home care of the body, cremation costs, burial containers {shrouds, caskets, urns} ceremonial/memorial events, officiant participation, and more), are all arranged and paid for separately to the selected provider. Note: If the decedent was receiving certain financial aid benefits, they may qualify for the state benefit to help pay for some funeral-related costs. For more information, refer to the Financial Aid through the Wisconsin Dept. of Health Services: [Wisconsin Funeral and Cemetery Aid Program \(WFCAP\)](#).

### ***Why is there a mark-up for casket/container burials (vs. shroud)?***

While we do not want to actively discourage clients from choosing caskets or other hard containers instead of fabric shrouds, we do charge an additional fee for this. Two things factor into this: operations and environmental sustainability. The opening of a burial site for a casket is significantly larger, dimensionally speaking, than for a shroud, resulting in a differential of labor intensity (especially in the cold months), as we dig our sites manually (with shovels, not machines). Also, using a casket takes up more space in the cemetery, which makes it more difficult to locate a site for (considering the surrounding trees, shrubs, etc.). It also entails a more significant ecological footprint as well as serves as an impediment to the decomposition and the reintegration of the human nutrient into the soil.

### ***Is there any other required paperwork besides the NPS Legacy Donation and Burial Right agreements?***

Yes, but only on the day of the burial when the funeral director (or family representative acting as funeral director) is required to present a copy of a legal document called the **Wisconsin Report for Final Disposition of a Human Corpse/Burial Transit Permit** (one form). This document is readily available to funeral directors and coroners/medical examiners who typically handle this process.

Families who choose not to engage a licensed funeral director (those who plan for a family-led home funeral and plan to transport the body themselves) also need to present this form. To obtain the form, they must make a request to the Vital Records Dept of the WI Department of Health Services at (608) 266-1373 during limited business hours M-F. Once the call is made, DHS will email or fax the form to the person making the request. Note: DHS Policy is that this form can be obtained only after the death has occurred which may make it difficult to obtain in a timely manner.

### ***Are full-body burials preferred at NPS?***

We do accept cremated remains (aka cremains or ashes); however, we ask that you consider the energy demand of cremation while comparing burial vs. cremation options. If the cremains are buried in an urn, all urns must be biodegradable. Burial and scattering of cremains will be allowed in designated parts of the NPS burial grounds and will be documented and recorded in the same manner as any burial. Note that Wisconsin law requires a minimum 48-hour wait period after a person dies before cremation can be performed.

### ***How is the specific location of a gravesite assigned?***

Because NPS is a natural burial cemetery and forest preserve, choosing a gravesite location must consider different aspects of the terrain, among other factors. In order to prioritize environmental and operational sustainability, we have found it most reasonable for NPS to choose specific burial sites for clients at the time of need.

### ***What If I want to “reserve space” for a future burial in an adjacent grave?***

If you or a loved one are purchasing a burial right at NPS and you have a desire to have adjacent burial sites, we encourage you to express this desire to us at the time of purchase so that when we select a site for whomever precedes the other in death, we can choose an area that will accommodate an adjacent site.

### ***Can pets be buried at NPS?***

We allow pets cremated remains to be buried with the remains/cremains of their people, but we don't allow full-body pet burials. We do not currently have a designated space for pet remains. Please contact our cemetery director for details by calling our office at: (608) 845-8724.

### ***How are graves prepared for burial and later closed after burial?***

All graves are dug by hand (with a pick and shovel); they are also closed (covered over) in a similar fashion, by NPS staff members. However, we encourage family and friends of the deceased to be part of the process if time allows and they have the desire to help. Family and friends attending the burial of their loved one are also welcome to help close the grave should they wish to do so.

### ***How are gravesites maintained after burial?***

After a burial at NPS, gravesites usually require minimal maintenance. As the cemetery space is also a forest preserve, our stewardship of it aims to allow the burial sites to return to their natural state, however, some instances – such as when a burial mound settles unevenly – may warrant staff management. With approval by the NPS Director, friends and family of those buried at NPS are encouraged to sow native seeds at the site of their loved one.

### ***Are there any circumstances where burial at NPS is not possible?***

If a burial right purchase was not made prior to time of need and the volume of burials at NPS at that point in time exceeds our staffing capacity and reasonable efforts, we reserve the right to decline a burial and suggest exploring other options. Inclement weather (snow/ice/thunderstorm, frozen ground, etc.) may warrant postponing a burial until conditions improve or until opening of burial site is completed.

## **When the Time Comes...**

### ***Who is responsible for making burial arrangements?***

Deciding who will be responsible for coordinating and communicating all arrangements for final disposition is an important step in preparing for a person's death. In Wisconsin, if the person who will be buried at NPS is still living and able, they may wish to complete an [Authorization for Final Disposition](#) form, a type of advance directive that assigns a personal representative to handle these matters. If a designated agent is not chosen in advance, these responsibilities typically fall on the deceased's closest living relative, such as a spouse, adult child, parent, or sibling.

Burial arrangements made between a representative of the deceased, NPS, and a funeral home generally occur in a "tri-directional" manner where each of the respective parties will work together as necessary to clarify and confirm arrangements.

### ***How soon after death does burial usually take place?***

Burials are handled on a case-by-case basis depending on a variety of factors. Except for those whose cultural or religious traditions require that a burial must take place only one or two days after death, most NPS burials happen one or two weeks after death (although some occur up to a month later). This delay is often helpful to those who are dealing with numerous other concerns at this time, including making arrangements for family and friends who may want to travel long distances to participate in the burial event.

### ***When and how should I contact NPS to schedule a burial?***

Unless cultural/religious practices require that burial take place only one or two days after death, contacting NPS is generally not an urgent matter. In most cases, calling our office number during normal business hours, one-to-two days after death allows ample time to arrange for a burial that will take place a week or more after death occurs. Information to have on hand generally includes:

- Name and contact information for the personal representative responsible for making arrangements,
- Name of the deceased,
- Contact information for the funeral home involved,

- Preferences for time and date of burial,
- Notification of any special accommodations.

If, however, a call concerns an urgent matter and is made on the weekend or outside of normal business hours, (10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Mon. – Fri.) when we are generally not in the office, please call the NPS Cemetery Director's cell phone at: (608) 616-9815 and leave a voicemail message. Voicemail is checked regularly; response time is generally within 12 – 24 hours.

### ***How much lead time is needed to have a grave prepared?***

Several factors may influence the timeline between the point of death to the time of burial—such as whether prior arrangements were made with NPS and a funeral home, the schedule/availability of NPS staff as it relates to locating/digging the site and facilitating the burial, and weather. Cultural traditions/customs or other religious rites are honored whenever possible. If it is known that a death is likely to occur within a few days, letting us know can help us start preparations sooner (this is never expected).

### ***Are there restrictions for days/times for burials?***

Burials are generally held on weekdays between 10:00 a.m.– 3:00 p.m., although accommodations may sometimes be made to schedule a burial for later in the day or on weekends (note: burials held on the weekend include an additional fee of \$500).

### ***Are there any seasonal issues?***

Natural Path Sanctuary conducts burials year-round. However, it is possible that conditions, especially during the winter season (ice storms, frozen ground with no snow and its insulating effects, etc.) could be such that postponing a burial date by a few days may be necessary.

### ***How is the decedent's body transported to the cemetery?***

Typically, funeral home personnel are involved in transporting the decedent's body to the cemetery along with required paperwork (Report for Final Disposition/Transit Permit). In family-directed home funerals, however, family members may provide transport, although a family member must be in the vehicle and have proper paperwork that includes a Report for Final Disposition/Transit Form obtained from the Vital Records office at the Wisconsin Department of Health Service (see question about paperwork above).

### ***How is the body moved from the transport vehicle to the gravesite?***

At NPS, bodies are generally placed on a minimally constructed, biodegradable wood pallet and transported to the grave site by one of two means: traditional pallbearing on foot or motorized transport via an all-terrain vehicle. In either case, the assistance of six people is necessary to move the body to the gravesite and to lower the body in the ground.

### ***How are pall bearers/assistants selected?***

Generally, when meeting with families we discuss various ways that they might like to be involved in the burial itself, including whether they would like to use pallbearers to carry the body to the gravesite. Pallbearers can be designated by the person arranging the funeral, selected spontaneously on the day of the funeral (if there are enough attendees who are willing and able to help). Otherwise, NPS will be sure to staff accordingly.

### ***What accommodations are available for family and guests attending a burial?***

Due to conditions established by the Town of Springdale (our local regulating authority), we can only have family and friend-based burials with no large funeral services, and attendance limited to a 20-vehicle parking limit. No parking is allowed along Spring Rose Road.

- Portable outdoor restrooms are located on the premises near the parking area.
- Indoor restrooms can be found in the Farley Center House (where our offices are located).
- Rides to/from the gravesite are possible for attendees with accessibility limitations.
- Limited indoor space in the Farley Center House may be available for short gatherings before or after the burial during inclement weather. For those who wish to arrange a gathering before or after a burial, please contact the NPS Cemetery Director in advance by calling (608) 845-8724, or sending an email to [nps@farleycenter.org](mailto:nps@farleycenter.org).

### ***What NPS staff members are present before, during, or after burials?***

Depending on the extent to which family members and friends of the deceased wish to be involved in the burial process of their loved one, NPS will staff accordingly. While we not only allow, but also encourage bereaved to take as much time as needed to process their grief and share time and the space together on the day of a burial, typically cemetery staff will only be available for up to 2-1/2 hours for each burial (an hour before scheduled time and up to one and a half hours after scheduled time) at which point the burial site closing should be complete so as to allow staff to be excused.

### ***When can I return to visit a grave?***

Family and friends of those buried at NPS are always welcome to visit the cemetery from dawn to dusk any day of the week. If you need assistance with finding the burial site of a loved one or have mobility limitations, please schedule an appointment for staff assistance at least 2 weeks in advance.

## **Working with Funeral Homes and/or Cremation Services Providers**

### ***Are the services of a licensed funeral home mandatory or even necessary?***

Most people rely on the services of a licensed funeral director or funeral home to help manage the activities that occur in the period between the time of death and the time of burial (which can vary from hours to days or weeks). In many cases (especially if death is expected and occurs in a hospital, nursing home, hospice center, or at home under hospice care), final arrangements can be made in advance with a local funeral director. Then, after the death occurs, all it takes is a simple phone call to the funeral home where details of the funeral plan are implemented.

Note that all fees for funeral home services and related products are separate from and additional to those charged by NPS and can be planned and paid for in advance.

While NPS cannot and will not endorse or recommend any specific funeral-service provider, we maintain strong positive working relationships with all local funeral homes, many offer special “green burial packages”. Should you choose a funeral home that is not yet familiar with NPS, we are always eager and available to answer any of their questions or concerns.

There are those who may wish to hold a home funeral (sometimes called a family-directed funeral or home-based funeral), which allows for after-death care to be conducted by family or friends, and for keeping the deceased at home prior to burial or cremation. Although there is official paperwork and a certain protocol that must be followed, home funerals are legal in most states, including Wisconsin. It is not required to involve a conventional funeral director when conducting a home funeral—although some may be willing to provide support and guidance. If you are considering a home funeral, you are encouraged to research what is involved in sheltering and preparing a body at home for burial or cremation, and to explore this alternative with a home-funeral consultant before making this choice. There are numerous resources available to help you learn about these alternative approaches.

### ***What do I need to tell a funeral home or direct cremation provider?***

Once death occurs, (unless a home-funeral is planned), the personal representative of the deceased calls the funeral home or cremation service provider of choice to arrange for the body to be transported to the place where the body will be sheltered and preparations for burial will be completed. Sometimes the call might be made by a hospice team member, however once the deceased's body is under care of a licensed funeral director, the personal representative is responsible for further communication with them.

It is important that the funeral home understands that any post-mortem care does not include embalming of any sort, and any burial container or covering must be made completely from biodegradable material approved by NPS (shroud, or plain casket). Although the date and time of burial must be confirmed with NPS, it is important for the funeral home to know these requests. Funeral homes generally offer some models of natural burial containers including shrouds and caskets. An internet search will also provide you with options for containers that meet biodegradability standards. A list of possible sources for purchasing shrouds and other biodegradable containers can be found on the Helpful Resources page at the end of this document.

### ***What if the funeral director suggests that embalming is necessary?***

If a body is embalmed, it cannot be buried at NPS. Embalming is under no circumstances required by law, so if a funeral home suggests or requires embalming, it can be declined. Most local funeral homes understand and are happy to comply with green burial practices. Several offer “green burial packages” in their list of services. However, some funeral homes may have policies that impose embalming for certain reasons, which is another reason to choose a funeral home in advance and specify green burial in advance.

### ***How is a body prepared and cared for if embalming is not used?***

This may include washing the body, shrouding or casketing, sheltering for a time (in climate-controlled refrigeration), and finally, transporting the body to the cemetery for burial.

***What if the deceased has artificial materials (knee or hip replacements, pacemakers, and other devices, etc.)***

Artificial materials may remain in place, with the possible exception of pacemakers which a funeral home can remove prior to burial if desired. Generally, this is left to the discretion of the personal representative.

***What happens if someone's body has undergone an autopsy?***

When planning for a green burial following an autopsy, it may be critical to partner with a funeral home. An autopsy involves a large incision and internal examination of the organs of a deceased individual. Upon completion of the autopsy, there is typically a plastic lining placed in the abdominal cavity and the large incision is loosely sutured by the medical examiner/coroner/physician. A funeral home professional will know how to remove the lining and instead use a biodegradable method for securing the examined organs, then the funeral home professional will re-suture the incision and bathe the body before shrouding or casketing.

***What happens when the Medical Examiner's office is involved?***

Currently, instances in which a medical examiner exercises jurisdiction of a deceased person's remains require use of a funeral home, as the medical examiner will not release human remains to anyone other than a licensed funeral director.

***What happens when someone dies in a location that is far away from NPS?***

A death that occurs a relatively long distance from NPS does not necessarily preclude the deceased from an un-embalmed, full body burial at NPS. This is dependent on factors such as: how someone dies, where they die, and what plans are in place, if any.

If a death occurs in the United States, outside of Wisconsin, there are options to ensure an unembalmed full-body burial at NPS. Embalming is not legally required to cross any State lines; however, other methods are suggested to keep the body cool; temperature control, dry ice, or gel packs, all being options.

A document called "Report for Final Disposition/Burial Transit Permit" can be obtained from the State where the death occurred and is REQUIRED by law to transport a body either by motor vehicle or by air transportation. If air transportation is needed and the body is not embalmed, the utilization of enough dry ice or gel packs to cool the body during transport is required. A local Wisconsin funeral home would be able to assist by contacting an affiliate funeral home in the State where the death occurs, then arranging necessary paperwork, transportation, and coordination with NPS. The transportation and logistics would likely be a joint arrangement made by a funeral home from the area in which you die and as well as a funeral home in this area.

If circumstances do not allow an un-embalmed, full body burial at NPS, clients may want to explore other options, such as deciding on cremation and future interment at NPS, transferring the NPS burial right to someone else, or getting a partial refund from NPS.

## **Additional FAQs about Natural Burial**

### ***What is a natural burial (also referred to as a “green burial” or “conservation burial”)?***

This is how everyone was buried throughout most of human history. Conventional burial techniques with steel or bronze coffins and concrete vaults are actually quite modern. Aside from the Egyptian pharaohs, embalming only became common around the time of the Civil War. In a natural burial, a person is laid to rest wrapped in a shroud or in a biodegradable container such as a natural wooden casket, or even cardboard box. They are not embalmed. (B)

### ***What’s wrong with embalming?***

Embalming fluid is primarily comprised of the carcinogenic chemical formaldehyde, which has been proven to pose health risks in funeral homes. A study by the National Cancer Institute released in late 2009 revealed that funeral directors have a much higher incidence of myeloid leukemia. The sanitation and preservation of a corpse can almost always take place without the use of chemicals, as is done in just about every nation in the world – with the exception of the US, Canada, and a half-dozen other countries. (A)

### ***Doesn’t embalming prevent disease?***

Infected bodies can remain a potential source of infection for a short time after death whether embalmed or not, but as is the case with infected live patients, transmission requires direct contact with infectious tissue or body fluids, which requires usual safe handling steps with or without embalming. Pathogens (with a few rare exceptions) depend upon living tissues. They are parasites. When the body dies, the pathogens die as well. The soil flora can deal with these pathogens. (D)

### ***Does cremation create a lot of pollution?***

Cremation uses far fewer resources than typical disposition options, but it certainly has an environmental impact. Cremation burns fossil fuels, and some older cremation facilities can use more energy compared to newer ones. Mercury is also emitted when a person with dental amalgam fillings is cremated. (A)

### ***Will animals disturb the body?***

No, the body is buried three feet deep, depending on the soil composition at the cemetery. This depth ensures that remains are both undisturbed and return quickly to nature.

### ***How is a natural/green/conservation cemetery maintained?***

Most state laws require that a percentage of a burial plot’s sales price goes into a permanent endowment for the care of the space and maintain the land (Wisconsin requires 15%). A natural cemetery requires very little maintenance compared to a lawn-type/conventional cemetery, avoiding use of fossil fuels and carbon dioxide emissions that occur with frequent lawn mowing. Concrete vaults are not used in a natural burial which are only useful for maintaining a level surface so that it can be easily mowed. In comparison, in a natural burial ground the vegetation is allowed to grow naturally. Some green cemeteries implement land management procedures, reforesting land or restoring prairies. Care is taken to nurture indigenous growth only. (C)

*Sources: A. Green Burial Council; B. Foxfield Preserve at The Nature Center; C. Trust for Natural Legacies; D. Pan American Health Organization*

# Additional Resources

## Funeral Planning

- <https://www.funeralbasics.org/funeral-planning-checklist/>
- <https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/making-funeral-arrangements-wisconsin.html>
- [www.funeralwise.com](http://www.funeralwise.com)

## Green Burials

- <https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/>
- <https://www.funeralbasics.org/what-is-green-burial/>

## Local sources of Biodegradable Burial Containers and Coverings

- Humble Crossings/Gene Delcourt: <https://www.humblecrossings.com/> (608) 354-6923
- Firefly Woodworks/Prairie Sundance: [www.fireflywoodworks.com](http://www.fireflywoodworks.com) (608) 553-3292
- Northwoods Casket Company: <https://www.northwoodscasket.com/> (888) 799-5077
- Threshold Care Circle: <https://www.thresholdcarecircle.org/>

## Difference between conventional cremation vs. direct cremation

- <https://www.us-funerals.com/traditional-cremation-vs-direct-cremation-what-you-need-to-know/>

## WDCAP Financial Aid Program

- <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p03123.pdf>

## Home Funerals

- <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/>
- <https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/wisconsin-home-funeral-laws.html>
- <https://walkingeachotherhomemadison.org/>
- <https://www.thresholdcarecircle.org/>
- <https://www.sevenponds.com/>