



LAW OFFICERS
OF THE CROWN



H.M GREFFIER

Guidance for Funeral Directors & other Stakeholders:

Procedure for Electronic Death Documentation

Effective from 24th March 2020, updated 7th April 2020

In light of the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2, the virus causing the spread of COVID-19 and Public Health measures being taken to prevent or slow the spread of infection, the Law Officers of the Crown and the Head of Registration of births, deaths and marriages at the Greffe, on behalf of Her Majesty's Greffier, have agreed the following procedures for completing:

- (i) Declarations of Deaths;
- (ii) Medical Certificates of Cause of Deaths; and
- (iii) Applications for Cremations.

These procedures will take effect from **Tuesday, 24th March 2020** and have been updated on **7th April 2020**. They will apply until further notice.

These procedures are intended to minimise physical contact between undertakers, members of the public, medical staff and employees of the States of Guernsey where it can reasonably be avoided and to enable the usual authorisation, approval, or granting of relevant documentation relating to deaths, to be given electronically.

For the avoidance of doubt, this modified procedure applies to all deaths, not just those caused by COVID-19, and lasts for the duration of the current emergency.

These measures temporarily modify procedures in relation to the registration of deaths and still-births in Guernsey, Sark and Alderney and in relation to cremations in Guernsey. These amendments are to remove requirements for things to be done in person and to simplify procedures relating to registration of deaths, still-births and cremations during the current emergency situation. These modifications are similar to amendments made to UK legislation which have been effected under The Coronavirus Act 2020.



Completion Guidance

1. DECLARATIONS OF DEATH

- 1.1. Funeral Directors are asked to complete digital (including electronic signatures) or a scanned copy of the written Declaration of death (Form B). Funeral directors can complete and sign this on behalf of the family of the deceased, provided that this is confirmed by email or by letter from the family of the deceased. This confirmation is to be submitted along with the Declaration of Death.
- 1.2. The completed Declaration of Death and any confirmation of authorisation to act, should be emailed to registrar@guernseyroyalcourt.gg. **The Declaration of Death must be provided within five days after the death.** Please ensure that the deceased's name is included in the subject line of the email and please specify how many copies of the death certificate will be required.
- 1.3. The Registrar will register the death, if satisfied as to the above, but will await receipt of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death before issuing a Burial Permit.

2. MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF CAUSE OF DEATH

- 2.1. The medical practitioner can either complete a digital copy of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death ("MCCD") or a hand written and scanned version. In the signature space on the form, please ensure the medical practitioner both signs and prints their name (handwritten or electronically) in this box. **Please could medical practitioners ensure that these certificates are submitted, within five days, to prevent potential delays¹.**
 - 2.1.1. Please note that with effect from 2nd April 2020, medical practitioners no longer need to attend the deceased if they are unable to do so or if it is impractical for reasons related to the current emergency. This means the MCCD forms may be amended by the medical practitioners in accordance with the guidance. The full guidance is available to view on the Law Officers website.

¹ Under the Law Relating to the Registration of Births and Deaths in the Bailiwick of Guernsey 1935, as amended, deaths must be registered within five days of death.



2.2. The completed MCCD can then be emailed directly to:

registrar@guernseyroyalcourt.gg

and please copy in the funeral director for their information. Please ensure that the deceased's name is included in the subject line of the email.

If the deceased was not last seen alive within 28² days before their death, the Registrar will forward this certificate to the Law Officers for their review.

2.3. The Registrar will then issue an electronic Burial Permit and this will be emailed to the relevant funeral director.

3. APPLICATIONS FOR CREMATIONS

3.1. If a Cremation is being applied for, the funeral directors should complete the Application for Cremation either in electronic form or handwritten and scanned.

3.1.1. Funeral directors can complete and sign Form A on behalf of the family of the deceased, provided that this confirmed by email or letter from the family of the deceased. This confirmation is to be submitted along with the Application for Cremation.

3.1.2. Form A of the Application for cremation no longer requires the usual verification of the applicant by a countersignatory, however, it still requires the applicant to sign the declaration of truth towards the bottom of the form. This means that Form A will not need to be signed by someone under section 6(3) of The Cremation Ordinance, 1972.

3.2. The Law Officers will accept electronic signatures (if this is practicable) throughout the form, however, and if preferred, they will also accept a scanned version of Form A.

3.3. For completion of Form B of the Application for Cremation, this can be forwarded electronically to the medical practitioner. An electronic template

² Normally the period is 21 days, but this has been extended to 28 days during the current emergency, and in line with UK practice.



has been created by the Law Officers for this purpose. Please note that under the Guidance for Medical Practitioners, issued on 3rd April 2020, medical practitioners may amend the Form B in accordance with the guidance.

- 3.4. The Form C (Confirmatory Medical Certificate) is not required for the duration of the emergency.
- 3.5. The completed Application for Cremation, Burial Permit and any authorisation to act on the family's behalf, should be emailed to Coroner@gov.gg. Please ensure that the deceased's name is included in the subject line of the email.
- 3.6. This inbox will be monitored at least twice daily. In the event of an urgent application, please email the completed form and call the Law Officers on 743737 or the main office number 723355.
- 3.7. Authorised Applications for Cremation will be emailed to the relevant funeral director.

4. DEATH CERTIFICATES

- 4.1. Whilst it is still practicable to do so, and subject to any further advice from Public Health, the Greffe will continue to issue hard copies of any Death Certificates and these will be posted to the funeral directors or, if requested, directly to the family. If this is required, please provide their postal address by email. If this situation changes, we will provide further updates via email.

5. ABOVE GROUND ORDERS

- 5.1. In the event that a body needs to remain above ground for longer than 15 days from the person's death during the current emergency, funeral directors, the Consultant Pathologist or the Guernsey Police will not be required to apply for an "Above Ground Order", provided that the body remains in the custody of the States of Guernsey, States of Alderney or a funeral director.



CORRESPONDENCE/QUERIES:

If you have any queries regarding registrations of deaths etc. please email registrar@guernseyroyalcourt.gg.

For any general queries regarding sudden or unexpected deaths, post mortems, Applications for Cremations, inquests, etc. please email to Coroner@gov.gg.