

## 2015 Direct Cremation Price Survey

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Funeral Consumers Alliance of Minnesota has conducted a Price Survey for **Direct Cremation** in the Twin Cities metro area, and we've put together **FAQs** (*Frequently Asked Questions*) to help you learn about the variety of options and choices available to you when you choose **Direct Cremation**.

Almost 57% of Minnesotans now chose Cremation as the way to prepare their body for its final resting place. Cremation is changing the way we think about our final exits.

Cremation is also challenging the bottom line of traditional funeral providers, along with the way these funeral firms market their goods and services. In short, more cremations mean fewer conventional funerals with the added expense of embalming, use of the funeral home for services, and use of limousines, not to mention a casket and burial vault.

For example, a presentation at the 2012 annual convention of the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) illustrates how the American death care industry is scrambling to respond to the dramatic increase in cremation. The presentation - ["7 Ways to Make Cremation Profitable"](#) - by Florida funeral director Bill McQueen, suggests ways funeral firms can recover income lost to cremation. Here's **#4**:

### Stop offering temporary urns

**While you might think your families won't like it, Anderson-McQueen [Funeral Home] stopped offering temporary urns and guess what? There have been minimum complaints. Imagine how much revenue you can earn from one simple change.**

One might wonder if there were "minimum complaints" because families weren't aware that it's standard practice to offer a "temporary" cremation remains container (urn). No doubt families weren't told that they could bring their own "urn" for their loved one's cremated remains instead of buying one from the funeral home. After all, funeral firms cannot charge if a family chooses to use its own urn. "Imagine how much revenue" they'd lose.

**When choosing Cremation, remember: the amount you spend is not equal to the amount you love.**

Many of the calls and email inquiries to Funeral Consumers Alliance of Minnesota are about some aspect of Cremation. We hope the **Direct Cremation Price Survey** and **FAQs** will help you make wise, meaningful, and affordable choices when you decide on Cremation. We also hope that if you haven't already made your final plans – your after-death arrangements – that you'll be inspired to make a plan, talk to loved ones about it, write it down, and...rest in peace. Learn more about Planning [HERE](#).

## FAQs

### What Is Direct Cremation?

The term "Direct Cremation" is best understood as meaning the minimal use of a funeral home and funeral home personnel (the funeral firm) to carry out the cremation of a dead human body. Some funeral firms use the term "Immediate Cremation" or "Basic Cremation."

*Direct* does NOT mean you cannot have a gathering, worship service, celebration of life or other commemoration of the one who has died – with or without the cremated remains present. It means only that you're not hiring the funeral firm to provide those services.

When you choose direct cremation, the body is taken directly from the place of death to the crematory. Normally, the body stops at the funeral home or crematory (some funeral homes have their own on-site crematory) where it is sheltered (refrigerated) long enough to secure the death certificate and cremation permit – and for the family to sign the cremation authorization form.

Before the body is taken directly from the place of death to the crematory, you have another option:

You may choose to keep vigil with the body after death before calling the funeral firm. Learn more about caring for our dead at home [HERE](#).

On the **RIGHT** is a list of what is included in the price of a Direct Cremation.

- *Basic Services of Funeral Provider and Staff*
- *Transfer of Deceased from Place of Death to Funeral Home*
- *Filing Necessary Paperwork*
- *Care/Shelter of Remains Until Time of Cremation*
- *Crematory Charge*
- *Alternative Containers for Cremation Process & Cremated Remains*

### What Does Direct Cremation Cost?

In the Twin Cities Metro area, the price of Direct Cremation – for exactly the same set of services – ranges from \$750 to \$4,200.

You can find the 10 lowest-priced Direct Cremations on our *2015 Direct Cremation Price Survey* chart at the bottom of this page, or you can download a copy of the chart [HERE](#).

### **Why do prices vary so widely for the same set of services?**

One reason Direct Cremation pricing varies is simply because it costs some funeral firms more to operate. If a funeral firm has a large facility, a fleet of cars, and a large staff, their overhead expenses are higher. The price is usually higher if a funeral firm is owned by a publicly traded corporation. Less overhead and non-corporate usually means less cost to the consumer.

None of the top advertisers of cremation services in the Twin Cities Metro area are among the 10 lowest priced. “*Minnesota’s largest provider of cremation services*” and “*America’s trusted cremation provider*” offer exactly the same set of services for a Direct Cremation as the 10 providers on our *Price Survey*. One difference: they spend more on advertising. So will you, if you choose them.

All of the funeral firms on our 10-lowest-price *2015 Direct Cremation Price Survey* are, as required by law, licensed by the Minnesota Department of Health Mortuary Science Section.

### **What about value?**

The definition of **Value** is: the amount of money that something is worth; something that can be bought for a low or fair price; usefulness or importance. Some funeral homes seem to be saying: *Pay more for **our** Direct Cremation rather than a lower or fairer price because we say so.*

The Cremation Association of North America (CANA) recommends that consumers NOT choose a funeral home based solely on price. However, paying more does not equal better value.

### **Why don't all funeral homes post their prices on their websites?**

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) strongly recommends that consumers “shop around” before choosing a funeral or cremation provider. Unfortunately, most funeral firms don’t post their prices online. Thus, families have to visit a funeral home or call to obtain prices. (Funeral firms are required to give you a copy of their price list when you ask for one in person, or when you call and ask for prices.) The standard funeral firm General Price List (GPL) can be initially overwhelming, which is one reason it can be helpful to view the GPL in the comfort and privacy of one’s home.

Learn more about the funeral home General Price List (GPL) [HERE](#).

### **What is an alternative cremation container?**

Minnesota law requires that a body be placed in a covered, rigid container for the cremation process. "Alternative" is funeral firm lingo for: "other than a combustible (wood) casket which you can purchase from us for several hundred dollars, or buy from another vendor.") An alternative cremation container is usually made of corrugated cardboard.

### **What is an alternative cremated remains container?**

"Alternative" is funeral firm lingo for: "other than a cremated remains container (urn) that you buy from us or purchase elsewhere." It's sometimes referred to as a *temporary* cremated remains container. The alternative container included in the price of a Direct Cremation is made of plastic or cardboard.

Cremation urns are available in various materials, styles, and prices, and can be purchased from funeral homes, crematories, online retailers, and other places. Though you may purchase an urn before the cremation (so that the cremated remains are returned to you in the urn you've purchased), you may also take your time in purchasing an urn, since the crematory will provide an alternative container for you.

Learn more about urns and other cremation containers [HERE](#).

### **What is a Private Family Viewing?**

Family members who were unable to be present for the last days/hours of life – or for the actual death – of a loved one may wish to arrange for a private family viewing of the body before cremation, usually at the funeral home. Often, there is an additional charge for this.

### **What is a *Witness* Cremation?**

Families can request to be present for and *witness* the cremation. What is viewed is the cremation container being placed inside the crematory chamber (called a *retort*), the door closed, and the process started. The cremation inside is not viewed. Often, there is an additional charge for this.

The crematory will have a space for families to gather and witness the cremation, usually a room with a window to view the process.

In some religions and cultures the cremation process is witnessed as a part of the

funeral itself. In Hinduism, for example, the cremation process is started by the first born son.

Practically speaking, burial and cremation are ways of disposing of a dead human body. However, traditionally, rites, ceremonies, and other practices have surrounded the dead human body for two other reasons: to honor, reverence, and accompany the dead, and to help survivors through the stages of mourning. A witness cremation is one way to accompany and show respect for the one who has died.

Some funeral firms liken the witnessing of a cremation to being present at the graveside for burial. However, unlike burial, cremation is not the final destination.

### **What will happen to the cremated remains?**

Since cremation is NOT the final destination, you'll want to make a decision about what will happen to the cremated remains after the cremation process. See our [Cremation](#) page to learn more.

### **What is the impact of Cremation on the environment?**

Cremation is relatively green compared to conventional burial involving a metal or hardwood casket, concrete vault and formaldehyde-based embalming. Crematories are designed to burn efficiently and to scour combustion gases before releasing them into the atmosphere. Primary emissions are made up of carbon monoxide and fine soot, but sulfur dioxide and trace metals may also be produced. In addition, mercury from dental fillings is vaporized and released into the environment.

A single cremation releases approximately 540 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere (equal to almost 28 gallons of gasoline). Given the average American's lifetime consumption of fossil fuel, cremation plays a small role.

### **Is there an environmental-friendly alternative?**

Alkaline Hydrolysis (also known as "Green" Cremation) uses water and an alkali solution of potassium hydroxide which when heated, dissolves the body, leaving behind bone fragments and a sterile liquid. Alkaline hydrolysis is the natural process a body undergoes after burial, which can take up to 25 years. Green Cremation accelerates this natural process to 2-3 hours in a very quiet, controlled environment. Alkaline Hydrolysis uses 1/8 the amount of energy as cremation.

[Bradshaw's Simple Traditions](#) offers a \$450 Green Cremation upgrade for their Basic (Direct) Cremation package. Learn more about Alkaline Hydrolysis [HERE](#).

**NOTE:** Bradshaw's is currently the only funeral firm in Minnesota offering Green Cremation.

### **Want to learn more about Cremation?**

Go to our [Cremation](#) page to learn about:

- [The Cremation Process](#)
- [Options Before or After Cremation](#)
- [Final Disposition of Cremated Remains](#)
- [Mailing Cremated Remains](#)
- [State-by-State Cremation Statistics](#)

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### **SURVEY METHOD**

Prices on the *2015 Direct Cremation Survey* chart were obtained over the phone by volunteers of Funeral Consumers Alliance of Minnesota using a uniform script of questions. Calls to funeral firms were made between February 16 and March 16, 2015. Minnesota statutes regulating the funeral industry require funeral firms to give current and accurate price information over the phone. Please note that a funeral firm's General Price List (GPL) will state that "*prices are subject to change without notice.*"