



Larry Hogan, Governor · Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor · Robert R. Neall, Secretary

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**SUBJECT: Maryland Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)**

Greetings to All Concerned:

The Maryland State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors and others within State government continue to monitor the Coronavirus (COVID-19), especially its growing presence within the United States and Maryland. The Board is constantly reviewing updates from agencies including the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), and we are receiving guidance from Governor Larry Hogan (<https://governor.maryland.gov>) and the Maryland Department of Health (<https://health.maryland.gov/pages/home.aspx>) to ensure we have the most accurate information when making decisions. As this situation continues to evolve, the safety of professionals practicing mortuary science and the consumers of Maryland is our primary focus.

**STAYING HEALTHY, PER THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH:**

<https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Pages/Novel-coronavirus.aspx>

The best way for all of us to do our part to prevent the spread of any disease is to be sure we are following good hygiene - wash hands thoroughly and often, cover your cough, and avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Stay home if you are ill. One of the most imperative ways to stop the spread, experts say, is to avoid contact with a sick person, and to practice your own good hygiene. Part of that includes staying home when you're sick and thoroughly washing hands. Also consider using telemedicine, when available and appropriate, where you can see a doctor via phone or video, to get your questions answered from the comfort and safety of your own home without putting others or yourself at risk.

**ACCORDING TO THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (COVID-19) IS:**

<https://phpa.health.maryland.gov/Pages/Novel-coronavirus.aspx>:

Coronaviruses are a family of viruses named after their appearance, a crown. COVID-19 is not the same as other coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold. Some cause illness in people, and others, such as canine and feline coronaviruses, only infect animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses that infect animals have emerged to infect people and can spread between people, which is suspected to have occurred for the virus that causes COVID-19. Most coronaviruses cause mild symptoms, such as the common cold from which patients easily recover. Other strains of the virus -- such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) -- can cause pneumonia and possible death

COVID-19 virus symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure - with fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, and diarrhea. However, in a small portion of the population with either COVID-19 or influenza (common flu), symptoms can progress to kidney failure and respiratory failure due to pneumonia.

Researchers found the viruses can “persist and live on inanimate surfaces like metal, glass or plastic for up to 9 days.” More specifically, the viruses can remain infectious on such materials between “two hours up to nine days,” according to a paper published in The Journal of Hospital Infection. COVID-19 can remain in the air for up to three hours.

**PER THE GUIDANCE OF THE CDC - SANITIZING:**

([https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list\\_03-03-2020.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf)): Follow good hygiene - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Among the disinfectants on the CDC-approved list, there are a number of professional and common household cleaners, such as Lysol and Clorox. (Full list is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/cleaning-disinfection.html>) Surgical masks are typically used by surgeons to protect their patients from their mouth-borne germs — but “those masks don't work to prevent inhaling diseases,” said Dr. William Schaffner, a professor of preventive medicine and infectious diseases at Vanderbilt University.

**PER THE GUIDANCE OF GOVERNOR LARRY HOGAN; PROHIBITION ON MASS GATHERINGS AND CLOSURE OF SENIOR CENTERS:** Effective immediately, the Governor has ordered that gatherings of more than **10 people**, including social, community, spiritual, religious, recreational, leisure, and sporting gatherings, are prohibited at all locations and venues. See full order: <https://governor.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Prohibiting-Large-Gatherings.pdf>

In accordance with the Governor’s Order, planned large gatherings and events must be canceled or postponed until after termination of the state of emergency and the proclamation of the catastrophic health emergency has been rescinded. The Governor’s Order states that all senior citizen activities centers shall be closed beginning on Friday, March 13, 2020 until after termination of the state of emergency and the proclamation of the catastrophic health emergency has been rescinded.

**PER THE GUIDANCE OF GOVERNOR LARRY HOGAN; EXTENSION OF PERMITTING DEADLINES:** Because renewing expiring permits or licenses often requires the public to enter public buildings and interact with state employees; the Governor has ordered that all licenses, permits, registrations, and other authorizations issued by the State, its agencies or any political subdivision that would expire during the current state of emergency will be extended until the 30th day after the state of emergency is lifted. Please reference: <https://governor.maryland.gov/Licenses-Permits-Registration.pdf>.

**PER THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MORTICIANS AND FUNERAL DIRECTORS; CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS (IN-PERSON REQUIRED)**

**COMAR 10.29.05.05:** <https://health.maryland.gov/bom/pdf/ceuregs.PDF>: Because renewing expiring licenses often requires the public to enter public buildings and interact with others, in accordance with the Governor's Order, all 12 continuing education credits may be obtained using an online or distance education provider approved by the Board; as voted and approved at a public teleconference meeting on March 13, 2020 by a quorum of the Maryland State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors.

**PER GUIDANCE OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (OSHA); PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE):**

<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134>

AND;

Usage of the following PPE should be worn during post-mortem care according to the CDC:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-postmortem-specimens.html>

- Wear nonsterile, nitrile gloves when handling potentially infectious materials.
- If there is a risk of cuts, puncture wounds, or other injuries that break the skin, wear heavy-duty gloves over the nitrile gloves.
- Wear a clean, long-sleeved fluid-resistant or impermeable gown to protect skin and clothing.
- Use a plastic face shield or a face mask and goggles to protect the face, eyes, nose, and mouth from splashes of potentially infectious bodily fluids.
- NIOSH-certified (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) disposable N-95 respirator or higher
  - Powered, air-purifying respirators (PAPRs) with HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters may provide increased worker comfort during extended autopsy procedures.
  - When respirators are necessary to protect workers, employers must implement a comprehensive respiratory protection program in accordance with the OSHA Respiratory Protection standard: ([29 CFR 1910.134](#)[external icon](#)) that includes medical exams, fit-testing, and training.

Surgical scrubs, shoe covers, and surgical cap should be used per routine protocols. Doff (take off) PPE carefully to avoid contaminating yourself and before leaving the autopsy suite or adjacent anteroom <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/ppe-sequence.pdf>.

After removing PPE, discard the PPE in the appropriate laundry or waste receptacle. Reusable PPE (*e.g.*, goggles, face shields, and PAPRs) must be cleaned and disinfected according to the manufacturer's recommendations before reuse. Immediately after doffing PPE, wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If hands are not visibly dirty and soap and water are not available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%-95% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water before using alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching the face with gloved or unwashed hands. Ensure that hand hygiene facilities are readily available at the point of use (*e.g.*, at or adjacent to the PPE doffing area).

Additional safety and health guidance is available for workers handling deceased persons under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19 at the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\), COVID-19 website](#).

Thank you and stay safe out there as you conduct business and live your daily lives. Information and updates about COVID-19 in Maryland are available at [health.maryland.gov/coronavirus](http://health.maryland.gov/coronavirus).

Sincerely yours,



**Dr. Mark E. Bailey**  
President  
Maryland State Board of Morticians and  
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cc: Deborah Donohue, Assistant Attorney General  
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