



Office of the Chairman

Timothy L. Nuvangyaoma

Office of the Vice Chairman

Clark W. Tenakhongva

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Hopi Burial Protocols, Guidelines & Recommendations

Based on information from the Arizona State Health Care Physicians, Expert Epidemiologists, the Center for Disease Control, our Hopi Elders and Cultural Advisors, we want to remind our Hopi-Tewa Sinom that the COVID-19 virus has proven to be highly contagious and deadly.

The following protocols are guidelines and reasonable recommendations to consider in the event that you may be faced with having to prepare for a funeral or burial of a loved one.

Hopi Burial Guidance

During the Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic, we acknowledge the cultural sensitivity of preparations related to death. It is important to understand that changes are necessary in handling the burial of our loved ones to prevent further transmission of the Coronavirus, COVID-19. These guidelines are to assist Hopi and Tewa people with burial arrangements during this pandemic. Although many want to honor a loved one with a traditional burial, doing so may put others at risk of contracting COVID-19.

Please seriously consider this thought:

Would the deceased person want anyone else to contract COVID-19?

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Positive Coronavirus COVID-19 Related Death:

The family is required to designate one person to represent them with their decisions to eliminate confusion and potential misunderstanding during your time of grief.

If someone passes on at home, immediately call the Incident Command at (928) 734-3661 between 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. OR after 5:00 p.m. and weekends at (928) 205-7295.

If someone passes on at the hospital, please make arrangements with the hospital's appropriate personnel.

Before making any burial decisions or preparations, communicate first with Hopi Social Services to learn of available burial funds.

To avoid any risk, contamination or further transmission of COVID-19, first responders who respond and/or remove the deceased family member will provide the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and a protective body bag to the designated family representative. These measures of protection are for your family's safety. Please remember, the home will require proper disinfection and continuous sanitizing for up to 14 days.

If you are required or designated to help a Hopi tribal member who dies from COVID-19, please follow the CDC guidance on transportation, handling and burial of the deceased, including the use of appropriate PPE and products to disinfect contaminated surfaces.

Handling the deceased on Hopi

If contact with the body is necessary due to religious or cultural practices, families are encouraged to work with their community leaders and the Hopi Emergency Response Team on ways to reduce their exposure as much as possible.

If at all possible, activities to avoid before, during and after a body has been prepared include; kissing, washing, and shrouding (to wrap or dress a body for burial).

Medical facilities will not release the body to family members, but will directly release the body to a Mortuary or a Funeral Home upon consultation with the family. Once the deceased is confirmed positive or is suspected of COVID-19, the mortuary will not allow any viewing of the deceased and physical contact with COVID-19 body. The mortuary will work with the family for the loved one to be delivered directly to the grave site.

Cultural & Traditional Considerations

It is important to consider the traditional Hopi philosophy and practice around funerals. In traditional Hopi culture, funerals were not intended to be an excuse for large gatherings, like family reunions and family celebrations. This is a solemn time for mourning and a respectful moment to honor the spiritual aspects of the deceased and their journey. There was never a need for an over abundant amount of food preparation. Only simple meals with food donated for the helpers and a little food for the deceased is needed.

Children should never be brought near or around funerals. When Hopi families experience a high level of deaths and funerals, it is advised against attending every single burial, or going just to hang out. During this time, families will directly designate the help needed. It is also believed that the spirit of the dead can call the living to join them which can cause emotional, spiritual and eventually, physical sickness.

Ways to Protect Your Family During Death & Burial

- Minimize contact of yourself and your family around the wrapped body.
- Protect yourself and your family when around each other by wearing masks, gloves, and/or Personal Protective Equipment.
- Limit the number of people handling the body.
- Handle each ceremony, ritual and practice with extreme care and caution.
- Handle prayer feathers with care and caution.
- Consider placing offerings outside of the wrapped body.
- Handle smoking and prayer ceremonies with care and caution.
- Avoid unzipping or unwrapping the body for any reason.
- Avoid bathing and/or washing the body.
- Manage gatherings at the gravesite.
- Manage gatherings in the home.
- Follow all food safety precautions and food handling guidelines.
- Package food “to go” and refrain from gathering after burial.
- Follow safety precautions for clean-up after each ceremony and funeral.

All other Deaths (Non-Coronavirus, COVID-19 related):

Communicate with Hopi Social Services before contacting a Mortuary if assistance is needed for burial. Failure to do so may result in the family having to pay all costs.

Communicate with Health Care Facilities/Hospitals and Mortuaries/Funeral Homes to learn of policies and protocol for release and/or holding of the body.

Communicate and make burial arrangements with family using COVID-19 preventive methods. Seek services of a Mortuary / Funeral Home to transport the body directly to the burial site. It should be handled as a COVID-19 death unless otherwise confirmed by medical staff.

Consider all the ways COVID-19 can spread. Burying a loved one during this time takes careful planning.

Further Preventative Measures

In order to help prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Discourage family and loved ones not living on the reservation from attending.
- If possible, only immediate family should attend.
- Limit the number of people in attendance.
- Donations should be dropped off at a designated location away from the family home.
- Emphasize the importance of maintaining a 6-foot physical distance between persons.
- Encourage frequent hand-washing for 20 seconds with warm water and soap. Have stations easily available and send water and soap with individuals who are handling the burial.
- Use gloves and face masks if contact with a deceased body is necessary *and* be sure to change gloves between tasks to avoid contamination.

Practice safety precautions for everyone's safety

If contact cannot be avoided, family or community members should, *at minimum*, wear disposable gloves and a face mask. Dispose of gloves in a no-touch waste receptacle and perform appropriate hand washing hygiene.

Additional Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be recommended based on the activity to be performed.

Hopi Tribal Resources

The Hopi Tribe Department of Social Services has a Burial Assistance Program for eligible, Hopi Tribal Members.

Who to Contact:

Call Social Services Program for more information from 8 AM – 5 PM or the Hopi Law Enforcement Services after hours.

Social Services: (928) 734-3392

Hopi Law Enforcement: (928) 734-7340 or 7341

Hopi Incident Command Line (8 AM – 5 PM business hours) - (928) 734-3661

Incident Command Line (after hours) (928) 205-7295

Hopi Health Care Center COVID-19 Hotline (928) 737-6188