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NFDA Scores BIG WIN for Funeral Service: Homeland Security Names Mortuary Workers as Critical Infrastructure Workers

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Brookfield, Wis. – At the urging of the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), [guidance issued today by the Department of Homeland Security's](#) (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) named mortuary workers as “critical infrastructure workers.” This underscores the vital role funeral directors and others who work in deathcare play in responding to the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

For more than a decade, NFDA has worked to ensure that during any mass-fatality event, mortuary workers are considered critical infrastructure workers. As the COVID-19 pandemic began to intensify globally and reach American shores, NFDA intensified its call to federal officials to solidify this classification.

The guidance noted words from President Donald Trump’s *Coronavirus Guidance for America*: “If you work in a critical infrastructure industry, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, such as healthcare services and pharmaceutical and food supply, you have a special responsibility to maintain your normal work schedule.”

Mortuary workers, which the guidance defines as “Workers performing mortuary services, including funeral homes, crematoriums, and cemetery workers” and “Workers who coordinate with other organizations to ensure the proper recovery, handling, identification, transportation, tracking, storage, and disposal of human remains and personal effects; certify cause of death; and facilitate access to mental/behavioral health services to the family members, responders, and survivors of an incident,” are included in the “Healthcare/Public Health” category along with doctors, nurses, people performing testing and researchers. This essentially covers the full spectrum of those who work in deathcare.

This guidance helps define for state and local public health officials the professions that are essential to the COVID-19 pandemic response. The guidance specifically notes that critical infrastructure workers should have priority access to personal protective equipment and be exempt from “shelter-in-place” mandates. While the guidance does not address priority access for a COVID-19 vaccine once it is developed, this guidance does signal that critical infrastructure workers would take precedence. NFDA is planning to send a letter to DHS asking them to prioritize mortuary workers once a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available.

“The ability of funeral professionals to safely carry out their duties during a mass-fatality incident is paramount. We were very pleased to see NFDA’s efforts pay off when the federal government

recognized mortuary workers as critical to the COVID-19 pandemic response,” said NFDA CEO Christine Pepper, CAE. “The role that funeral directors and cemetery and crematory workers are playing during the COVID-19 pandemic is critical. While their work may be overlooked, they are truly on the front lines in helping to care for pandemic victims and grieving families.”

NFDA is the world’s leading and largest funeral service association, serving more than 20,000 individual members who represent nearly 11,000 funeral homes in the United States and 49 countries around the world. NFDA is the trusted leader, beacon for ethics and the strongest advocate for the profession. NFDA is the association of choice because it offers funeral professionals comprehensive educational resources, tools to manage successful businesses, guidance to become pillars in their communities and the expertise to foster future generations of funeral professionals. NFDA is headquartered in Brookfield, Wis., and has an office in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit www.nfda.org.

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