

Burial At Sea – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do I need to apply for a permit or complete any other paperwork before performing a burial at sea?

EPA does not require an individual permit, however, you must notify the EPA of the burial at sea within 30 days following the event. In addition, the state from which you depart to perform the burial At sea may require you to complete some paperwork to meet that state's requirements. You should check with the state to ensure you have all the documentation needed. If the burial involves incorporation of cremated remains in concrete, permit requirements administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may also apply and you should check directly with them.

2. Do I need to apply for a permit or complete any other paperwork before scattering my relative's ashes in a lake or river?

Placement of cremated remains in inland lakes and rivers is not subject to federal regulation under the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act. States that administer the Clean Water Act National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permitting program, however, may have requirements governing the release of cremated remains into lakes and rivers of the state. You should contact the state environmental or health agency to get that specific regulatory/permit information for that State.

3. We were planning on scattering my friend's ashes at the beach by wading into the surf; can we do this?

No. The regulations specify that cremated remains may be buried in or on ocean waters without regard to the depth, provided that such burial takes place no closer than three nautical miles from land.

4. Who is qualified/allowed to perform a Burial At Sea?

The regulations at 40 CFR 229.1 indicate that a general permit for burial at sea is granted to all persons subject to the Ocean Dumping Act (Title I of the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act), as well as all persons owning or operating a vessel or aircraft registered in the United States or flying the United States flag and all departments, agencies or instrumentalities of the United States.

5. The form provided on your website has an entry for the name and phone number of the "Director or Person(s) Responsible for Burial Arrangements"; What are the qualifications needed for that person, do they have to be a funeral director, or someone licensed?

Federal regulations do not require that the responsible party have special credentials. EPA requires the name of the responsible party for

the public record and in case we need to follow-up with the individual should any questions about the burial arise.

6. Where do I send notification of a burial at sea?

You should send the notification within 30 days following the burial at sea to the appropriate EPA regional office listed at the end of our website (www.epa.gov/region4/water/oceans/burial). Please ensure that the notification is sent to the regional office serving the state from which you departed to perform the burial (the states each region serves are listed alongside the contact information).

7. What method of transmitting/submitting the report is preferred?

If you perform the burial within ocean waters adjacent to Region 4 states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina), you may use whichever method (postal service, fax or email) that is most convenient to you.

8. How do I find a boat to perform a burial at sea?

You may use your own boat or a friend's or relative's boat provided it is capable of travel in ocean waters. Otherwise, you may contact charter boat operators. There are some that even specialize in performing burials at sea, including the burial of a whole body. If the deceased is a military veteran, or their spouse, arrangements through the U. S. Navy may be possible. The U. S. Coast Guard will also provide such services for the cremated remains of veterans and their spouses.

9. What are the requirements for preparation and weighting of a casket to be used for burial at sea of whole body remains.?

EPA requires that all plastic and fabric materials be removed from the casket before burial at sea. EPA recommends that a minimum of six 3-inch holes be drilled into the casket to facilitate rapid flooding and venting of air. To further aid in rapid sinking, EPA recommends that additional weight be added to the casket based upon a four to one ratio of the body weight. For example, a whole body that weighs 150 pounds would need an additional 600 pounds to offset the buoyancy of both the body and the casket. Finally, the casket should be wrapped with stainless steel chain along both axes. EPA does not recommend the use of shipping straps due to the rapid deterioration of such materials in the marine environment.