



Guidelines & Procedures for Gravediggers and Funeral Directors

London Road Cemetery
&
Devizes Road Cemetery
Salisbury

In accordance with
the
ICCM

Introduction

1. These guidelines apply to all grave digging operations carried out in either London Road or Devizes Road Cemetery, which are owned and maintained by Salisbury City Council.
2. These guideline are issued to ensure graves are dug in a manner which is safe for both the grave digger, mourners and member/s of the public using the cemeteries.

Grave Digging – General Guidelines - Minimum Requirements

3. A hard hat must be worn when working in an excavation of a grave and Steel Toe Capped boots.
4. Any grave that is left unattended for whatever reason must be completely covered over and made secure as to prevent any person falling into the grave, and also cordoned off with warning tape.
5. Two gravediggers must be on site at all times when digging a grave in either of our two cemeteries to comply with all Health & Safety requirements. It is suggested that they carry a charged mobile phone.
6. Entry and egress from a grave must be by ladder. On no-account must a gravedigger climb out of a grave by treading on any part of the shoring, if being used.
7. A ladder must remain in place whenever an operative is working within a grave (if being dug by hand) in order to maintain an emergency exit. (*Confined Spaces Regulations 1997*).
8. Protective goggles must be worn when using a pick. Care must be taken when using a pick when shoring is in position so as to prevent striking and dislodging timber struts, screw jacks or acro struts. A damaged hydraulic ram may fail posing a hazard to the operative.
9. All finished graves should be prepared using imitation grass matting. The matting will be laid out neatly on staging leaving no folds or gaps which may cause Funeral Directors/staff, members of the Clergy, mourners or members of staff to trip. Walkboards/staging must be laid along the length of the grave and supported at each end and must be capable of carrying the weight of the Pall Bearers and Coffin.
10. All graves must be dug centrally within the respective grave space and within the four marker pegs positioned by Salisbury City Council staff.
11. Graves that are not dug centrally within the grave space will increase the risk of collapse, as the intervening wall of undug soil on one side will be of reduced thickness. Any nearby / adjacent memorials which pose a hazard to the grave digger must be temporarily moved to a safe distance from the grave to be excavated and replaced immediately following the interment.

12. It is courteous to contact owners of such memorials informing them that your actions are intended to reduce risk to the grave digger and also protect their particular memorial from damage should the grave being prepared collapse and their memorial fall. In this situation, advice from the Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager must be sought.
13. Any foul odours encountered should be reported immediately to the Crematorium & Cemeteries Manager or the Assistant Crematorium & Cemeteries Manager.

Preparing the Grave Our Cemeteries

14. Graves will be marked a maximum of two working days before the interment.
15. Graves must **only** be dug a maximum of two working days, including the day of burial, and must not be dug before the grave is marked. If the markers have gone missing or been moved gravediggers must telephone the Crematorium Office before digging commences so an SCC official can confirm the location of the grave.
16. Before digging the grave the grave digging staff must sign in the register at the Crematorium Office and telephone the office when finished. Graves can only be dug within working hours - Monday to Friday 8:30am-4:30pm.
17. Grave diggers/Funeral Directors must provide to SCC with a Risk Assessment & Method Statement (RAMS) for this activity.
18. The top of the final coffin interred within the grave (or body if no coffin is used) must be at least 3 feet (around 1 metre) below the level of the surrounding ground. The depth of excavation for a single burial should be 4 feet 6 inches (1 metre 37 centimetres).
19. If the grave is to be prepared to accommodate more than one burial, the depth should be adjusted as follows:
 - 2 burials: 6 feet (1 metre 83 centimetres).
 - 3 burials: 7 feet (2 metres 13 centimetres).
20. These depths take into account the requirement that there must be at least 6 inches (15 centimetres) of soil between coffins (or bodies) buried one on top of the other; please also see the 'backfilling' section towards the end of this guide.
21. The grave must be suitably shored when required with either strong, knot free timber or metal sections to prevent collapse when excavating or as mourners gather around it and, once excavated; it should be covered with a lockable cover and cordoned off so it is made safe for other visitors attending the cemetery.
22. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Code of Safe Working Practice for Cemeteries recommends grave shoring as shown in annex A.

Machine Digging

23. Only authorised trained persons will be permitted to operate grave digging machines in the London Road & Devizes Road Cemeteries.
24. Salisbury City Council will require to see this documentation annually.
25. The machine operator must ensure that no person stands within the area of the radius of the machine boom or bucket.
26. When a machine is not in use, it must be parked on hard Standing in such a manner that it does not cause an obstruction to traffic or pedestrians. When parked the boom must be lowered with the bucket resting on solid ground. The ignition key must be removed. The blade on tracked machines must be in the down position whenever the vehicle is parked.
27. The machine operator must ensure that the machine is safely manoeuvred into the digging position without leaving an unsightly mess (mats to be put down etc). Legs/stabilisers must be correctly positioned as far away as is practicable from the grave to be excavated. Placing stabilisers on purpose built bearers can spread the weight of the machine.
28. The blade on a tracked machine must be in the down position at all times when digging is in progress.

Hand Excavation

29. Shoring must be incorporated as digging proceeds. Adequate shoring will be incorporated so as to prevent the collapse of the sides of the grave. Soil type and weather conditions will affect the requirements for each particular grave. Particular care must be taken during periods of wet weather when it is advisable to close shore graves to full depth.
30. On completion of each excavation the gravedigger must ensure that the sides and ends of the grave are vertical and that the bottom of the grave is level. Shoring units must also be level and not protruding the top of the grave.
31. Once the grave has been dug and left it then must be covered and cordoned off so it is made safe for other visitors attending the cemetery, and only removed once the cortege arrives by members of the digging team/ funeral staff.

Second Person in Attendance

32. The *ICCM* recommends that a second person is in attendance whenever work is being carried out in an excavation of a depth greater than 3' (0.91m) in order to comply with the requirements of the Confined Spaces Regulations 1997.
33. The second person will be in a position to give warning to the gravedigger, raise the alarm in an emergency and commence emergency procedures.

Backfilling

34. The Council requires that all backfilling is completed in accordance with ICCM guidance. Further details of this can be found at Annex B.

Annie Child
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