

Funeral planning and Funeral Insurance Questions and Answers

Q. Should I plan my own funeral or that of a loved one in advance?

A. As with many events in our lives, a death involves making decisions in a very short period of time. Planning in advance can spare you or your family the difficulty of making these decisions while grieving. Planning in advance also gives you the opportunity to compare facilities, prices, and options and to discuss your choices with your family.

Q. What options are available to me?

A. A funeral, memorial service, burial, entombment, cremation, scattering at sea or inurnments are just a few of the options available. You may also wish to consider a donation to medical science. Exploring these options before the need arises lets you decide what is best for you and your family. It is also a good idea to obtain a copy of the Arizona State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers, *Consumer Guide to Arizona Funeral Information*. You can obtain a copy of the guide at no cost to you and also on this site link, or from ANY ARIZONA funeral establishments.

Q. If I decide to make pre-need funeral and/or pre-need cemetery arrangements, how do I select a reputable service provider?

A. All funeral establishments located in Arizona are licensed and regulated by the Arizona State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmer. You can check the status of a licensee by calling the State Board offices at (602) 542-3095. Additionally, you may wish to ask friends and relatives for referrals, check with the Better Business Bureau or speak to your local clergy. In some areas, there are non-profit memorial societies that offer help and guidance.

Q. Once I've decided which funeral arrangements are right for me and my family, what should I do next?

A. Memorialize these choices in a written pre-need plan. Most funeral establishments and cemeteries offer pre-arrangement guides you can complete and keep with your other important records to share with your family. You may also wish to place this information in a will.

Q. I've decided which funeral arrangements are right for me and I have completed documents stating what I want. Can my instructions be changed?

A. If your instructions are clear as to what arrangements you want and you have made provisions to pay for them to be carried out, only you can change them before they are needed. The exception to this would be if you leave written instructions stating the arrangements can be altered after your death; otherwise, California law states they must be followed.

Q. Should I consider paying for my pre-need choices before they are needed?

A. Making provisions to pay for the costs of pre-need funeral choices accomplishes several things. Prepaying removes the burden of the costs of your final expenses from your survivors, ensures your wishes can and will be carried out, and keeps you in control of the costs involved.

Q. Are there different ways to pre-pay pre-need expenses?

A. Yes. There are several commonly used methods: life insurance; funeral insurance; funeral trusts; bank held trusts and others. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. You should consider consulting an attorney before making a final decision. **Life insurance** will pay a fixed amount based on the face value of the policy. Generally, the face amount is the same as the amount of the services, merchandise and cemetery costs selected or required. Unless the pre-need contract is guaranteed, the actual costs may be greater than the policy proceeds at the time of need and additional funds may be needed from the survivors. **Funeral insurance** can be purchased in an amount to pay the costs of the services, merchandise and cemetery costs selected or required. If the prices are guaranteed, the survivors will not be charged more than the contracted amount. Before you purchase funeral insurance, you should know, in writing, exactly how much you will pay over the length of the contract and what will happen if you cannot, or do not, pay the premiums. **Funeral trusts** can be purchased in an amount to pay the costs of the services, merchandise and cemetery costs selected or required. If the prices are guaranteed, the survivors will not be charged more than the contracted amount. Before you buy a funeral trust, you should know: If the prices are guaranteed; the terms of cancellation; if the funds increase in value who will receive any remaining funds after the contract is fulfilled; what happens if the death occurs before the trust is paid in full. **Savings accounts** or bank-held trusts are accounts established by you with the savings in loan or bank, to pay funeral expenses. These are generally not guaranteed cost contracts by the service and merchandise provider. You would need to notify the provider and your family of their existence. You have complete control of your funds.

Q. Can I use a Pre-Need Policy at another location other than the Funeral home it was written for?

A. Yes you can, the only thing different is that the policy is only worth the face value of the policy. The funeral home has the option of honoring the itemized services requested or only honoring the face value of the policy and applying it to the total cost of services selected at their funeral home. If the value of the policy is more than the services requested, the responsibility of refund payment falls between the Family and the insurance company and can take up to 3 months to process.