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**GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS**

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**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

NO. 240

19 March 2021

**AMENDMENT OF DIRECTIONS ISSUED IN TERMS OF REGULATION 4(1) OF THE REGULATIONS MADE UNDER SECTION 27(2) OF THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ACT, 2002 (ACT No. 57 OF 2002): MEASURES TO ADDRESS, PREVENT AND COMBAT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19**

I, Dr Zwelini Lawrence Mkhize, the Minister of Health hereby, in terms of regulation 4(1)(b) of the Regulations made in terms section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002), published in *Government Gazette* No. 43258, Government Notice No. R.480 of 29 April 2020, as amended, vary the directions on the disposal of mortal remains published in the Government Notice No. 796 published in *Government Gazette* No. 43533 of 17 July 2020, as set out in the Schedule, in order to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19 in South Africa.



**DR ZWELINI LAWRENCE MKHIZE, MP**  
**MINISTER OF HEALTH**

DATE: 18/03/2021

## Schedule

### Definitions

1. In these Directions a word or expression bears the meaning assigned to it in the Regulations made under section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 and unless the context indicates otherwise-  
“**Directions**” means the directions published in *Government Gazette* No. 43533, Government Notice No. 796 of 17 July 2020 as amended by Government Notice No.868 of 7 August 2020, Government Notice No. 1278 of 3 December 2020, and Government Notice No. 1360 of 15 December 2020.

### Substitution of paragraph 9 of the Directions

2. The Directions are hereby amended by the substitution for paragraph 9 of the following paragraph:

#### **“Handling of COVID -19 mortal remains in mortuaries or at funeral undertakers**

9. (1) All persons, preparing, transferring, washing, and handling the body must use full PPE at all times.  
  
(2) A clear body bag must be used for transferring the body from the place of death to a premise for further handling.  
  
(3) (a) When in the hospital or private mortuary, the body bag may be opened for family members (one at a time) to identify the human remains without touching the body.  
(b) The mortuary attendant must wear full PPE at the mortuary.  
(c) The family members must be provided with masks and gloves for the viewing and must not touch the body with bare hands.  
(d) The undertaker must monitor and supervise the viewing of the human remains.

- (4)
  - (a) Washing of the human remains must be done by the funeral undertaker.
  - (b) If the family wishes to wash and/or dress the body, they may only do so under the funeral undertaker's supervision prior to the body being placed in the body bag or shroud or blanket prior to placing it in a coffin.
  - (c) Those carrying out the task referred to in subparagraphs (a) and (b) must wear PPE such as gloves, masks and waterproof coverall aprons.
  - (d) All PPE used must be safely disposed of immediately.
- (5) Once the body has been washed and prepared for burial, no further washing or handling of the human remains is permitted.
- (6) If a post-mortem is required, safe working techniques must be used, and full PPE must be worn.
- (7) Where embalming is required it must be undertaken at a funeral undertaker's premises and the embalmer must wear full PPE.
- (8) Where non reusable body bags are used, they must be cut immediately and disposed of as infectious waste.
- (9) Reusable body bags must be washed, cleaned and disinfected prior to reuse and be kept in a good condition.
- (10) A body bag, shroud or blanket may be used to cover the human remains for burial.
- (11) A body bag may be used for medical reasons or where the family decides to bury using such body bag.
- (12) Human remains and coffins may not be wrapped in plastic.”.

**Substitution of paragraph 12 of the Directions**

3. The Directions are hereby amended by the substitution for paragraph 12 of the following paragraph:

**“Measures applicable to funerals and the burial or cremation of COVID-19 mortal remains**

12. (1) A funeral undertaker must deliver the mortal remains on the day of burial and not the night before the burial and must, at all times, ensure that the remains are not touched.

(2) The organiser or family member who applies for an authorisation letter to bury or cremate the mortal remains from the Municipality or relevant Traditional Council or leader, is also responsible for ensuring that health requirements are adhered to, during the funeral proceedings.

(3) Distributing printed funeral programmes to people attending the funeral or the guests is prohibited.

(4) Singing or speaking at the funeral without a facemask is prohibited.

(5) The use of a microphone is allowed provided that the microphone is sanitised after each speaker.

(6) After funeral gatherings, including “after tears” gatherings or rituals are prohibited.”.

**Substitution of paragraph 15 of the Directions**

4. The Directions are hereby amended by the substitution for paragraph 15 of the following paragraph:

**“Disposal of COVID-19 Mortal Remains**

15. (1) The burial or cremation of the COVID-19 mortal remains must take place within five days from the date of death.

(2) The relevant district and/or metropolitan municipality in conjunction with the relevant local municipality must intervene where the burial or cremation of the COVID-19 mortal remains is not done within five days and such intervention must include the following:

- (a) The district and/or metropolitan municipality must give the family of the deceased person notice that the COVID-19 mortal remains must be buried or cremated within 24 hours of the said notice;
- (b) In the event of the family of the deceased person not complying with the notice referred to in subparagraph (a) the district and/or metropolitan municipality in conjunction with the local municipality, must proceed immediately with the burial or cremation of the COVID-19 mortal remains;
- (c) The undertaker must inform the municipality or relevant authority if the undertaker is aware or suspects that the burial or cremation may not take place within five days.

(3) Should the death rate appear to exceed the capacity of available space to keep mortal remains, the relevant health authority and/or municipality may intervene to facilitate multi-burials.

(4) Municipalities or the tribal authority must ensure that a multi-burial is done in consideration of human dignity and the necessary controls must be put in place to ensure that mortal remains can be identified.

(5) Machinery (for digging and closing of graves) may be used if deemed fit to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 and when hand tools are used during the digging and closing of a grave, the tools must be sanitised.

- (6) (a) Mourners and all other persons at the funeral must comply with all health requirements and must always wear their cloth face masks and sanitise their hands.
- (b) Spraying of funeral attendees and graves with bleach or any other unapproved sanitisation material or chemicals for sanitisation purposes is prohibited.
- (7) People carrying the coffin must wear disposable hand gloves, which must be disposed of properly.
- (8) A maximum of 50 people are allowed to attend a funeral, including undertaker personnel.”.

#### **Amendment of paragraph 17**

- 5. The Directions are hereby amended by the deletion of paragraph 17(9) of the Directions.

#### **Commencement**

- 6. These Directions come into operation on the date of publication in the *Government Gazette*.