







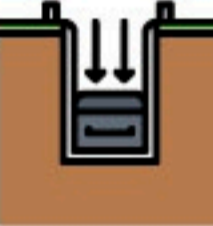


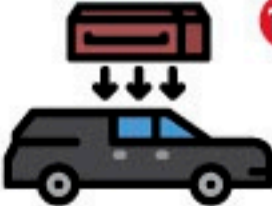


# Taking care of the deceased during Covid-19

With the Covid-19 global pandemic expected to peak in late August or September, more deaths are likely going to be recorded. To prevent health workers, funeral parlour staff and residents from potential infection while removing bodies, the Eastern Cape government has educated workers and communities on how to avoid possibly contracting the deadly novel virus from people who have died from Covid-19.

## When removing the deceased from hospital wards, this is the process that has to be followed by health workers:

-  Staff laying out the deceased to wear full personal protective equipment (PPE) – which is surgical mask, apron/gown, nonsterile gloves and eye protection goggles;
-  The body should be wrapped in a sheet or shroud and put on a leak proof body bag;
-  The body is placed on a trolley for transportation to the mortuary or straight to the hearse;
-  The outer surface of the body bag should be wiped down with 0.1% (1000ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach), or 70% alcohol-based solution before the body bag leaves the ward or anteroom area;
-  The trolley carrying the body must be decontaminated using 0.1% (1000ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach), or 70% alcohol-based solution before leaving the ward or anteroom as there maybe contamination during removal of the body from the bed to the trolley;
-  Before the body being removed from the ward or anteroom the mortuary attendants must remove the PPE and wear clean one as there maybe contamination during removal of the body from the bed to the trolley;
-  Family viewing and identification is allowed and can be done, whilst the body is in a clear body bag, in a state or private mortuary. The family is to be provided with masks and gloves but are not allowed to touch or kiss the body. After viewing, family members should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water;
-  Only an environmental health practitioner (EHP) can advise on the washing and preparation of the body. This to be done only at the mortuary or funeral undertakers premises;
-  EHPs should be notified of the death for the purpose of monitoring the handling of the body from the hospital to the burial site;
-  Funeral undertakers collecting bodies from hospitals should have a certificate of compliance issued by the municipality under their jurisdiction;
-  It is mandatory for funeral undertakers collecting body from the hospital mortuary to wear surgical mask, aprons or gowns, non-sterile gloves and eye protection goggles; and
-  Where possible, bodies should be removed from the ward to the hearse when being removed by a private funeral parlour if the next of kin has been notified as a measure to prevent contaminating hospital mortuaries.

## With some people dying at their homes, the provincial government's safety measures dictate that:

-  Family members should not handle bodies to prevent possible infection;
-  Funeral undertakers must be called immediately and told whether the deceased person had tested positive for Covid-19 or whether they were suspected to have contracted it;
-  Funeral undertakers must put the body in a leak proof body bag; and
-  The body must be taken to a mortuary by the funeral undertaker.

Scientific evidence has revealed that Covid-19 can remain infectious on surfaces for up to nine days, making the constant cleaning of surfaces key. To this end, mortuaries have to be kept ventilated all the time.

Environmental surfaces where the body was prepared must first be cleaned with soap and water, or a

commercially prepared detergent solution. After cleaning, a disinfectant with a minimum concentration of 0.1% (1000ppm) sodium hypochlorite (bleach), or 70% alcohol-based solution must be used to disinfect.

All waste generated as a result of handling corpses must be managed as health care risk waste.

While some people confirmed to have tested positive might die while being transported to hospitals, or people suspected to have been infected with the coronavirus will inevitable be handled by emergency medical services workers, ambulance crew members' safety while in the frontline, is equally important for the provincial government.

## The guidelines stipulate that:

- The EMS provincial coordinator and provincial CDC must be notified;
- A decision on where to take the corpse must be communicated to the ambulance crew;
- EHP must be informed;
- The corpse must only be removed from the ambulance at the identified communicated to the EMS crew;
- The corpse must be placed in a leak proof body bag;
- The bags must be wiped down with a 0.05% chlorine solution before leaving the ambulance; and
- EMS personnel must wear full PPE

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