



Coffins

What the law says (taken from Process Guidance Note 5/2 (12) – Statutory Guidance for Crematoria):

Coffin materials and cremator design

5.20 The emission limits and provisions specified in section 4 above may be achieved by careful use of materials in coffin construction and furnishing and by cremator design and operation (including abatement at new processes). The range of materials used for coffin or casket construction now includes cardboard, wickerwork (made from willow) as well as wood composite board and solid wood. Shrouds are also available and may use natural fibres such as cotton, linen or wool. Materials to be avoided in coffin or casket construction, furnishings and body preparation/embalming include halogenates, metals (except steel screws and staples), wax and more than a thin layer of water based lacquer on wood.

- PVC and melamine should not be used in coffin construction or furnishings;
- Cardboard coffins should not contain chlorine in the wet-strength agent. (e.g. not using polyamidoamine-epichlorohydrin based resin (PAA-E));
- Packaging for stillbirth, neonatal and foetal remains should not include any chlorinated plastics;
- Coffins containing lead or zinc should not be cremated

Guidance on coffins from crematoria to funeral directors

Construction of the coffin

The coffin must be of wood, a wood by-product or other suitable material which, when placed in a cremator and subjected to the accepted cremation process, is easily combustible and does not emit smoke, give off toxic gas or leave any retardant smears or drips after final combustion. No metal furniture or fittings whatever shall be used on a coffin for cremation. No metal of any kind shall be used in the manufacture of such a coffin except as necessary for its safe construction and then only of a high ferrous content. Cross pieces must not be attached to the bottom of the coffin. If it is desired to strengthen the bottom of the coffin, wooden strips may be placed lengthways inside the coffin for this purpose. The coffin must have a solid wooden base for the purpose of charging into the cremator. The coffin must not be varnished but may be covered with a suitable cloth, or can be decorated with a thin layer of water-based lacquer or paint. Products manufactured in polyvinyl chloride (PVC) must not be used in the construction of the coffin or its furnishings. The use of polystyrene must be restricted to the coffin nameplate only, in which case it must not exceed 90 grams in weight.

The coffin lid **must** be secured to the coffin. Worthing Crematorium will not accept receipt a coffin that does not have a lid that is **securely** attached. For guidance of the appropriate coffins to use please refer to the [Funeral Furnishing Manufacturers Association \(FFMA\)](#).

Lining of the coffin

The use of shredded paper, sawdust or cotton-wool must be avoided. If circumstances require, suitable sealing material may be used, but no metal, rubber or PVC will be permitted, and an account must pitch of similar substance be used.

Clothing/Additions to the coffin

Only clothes made from natural materials such as cotton, linen and wool will be permitted. Man-made fibres can cause excessive smoke and fumes, and are therefore not permitted. It is also not permitted to put into the coffin any object of substance which will not be easily reduced by cremation without causing excessive smoke or fumes. Metal, glass and ceramic objects should not be placed in the coffin.

Suggested Items that shouldn't be placed in a coffin:

- Anything containing a battery, eg mobile phone, radio, hand-held gaming device etc (batteries can explode and cause damage to the cremator)
- Anything made from metal that would not combust, eg stainless steel, wrought iron (soft metal such as gold and silver can be placed with the deceased but it should be made clear to families that they are not recoverable following the cremation as they will melt and become unidentifiable)
- Any firearms, other weapons or ammunition
- Anything that will not readily combust, eg ceramic mugs
- Anything made from glass (glass will melt and then reform on the cremator hearth, which can cause damage when the remains are raked down)
- Anything made from or containing PVC
- Anything made from rubber eg rubber soled shoes
- Any clothing that is not made from natural fibres, eg nylon, polyester
- Glossy paper such as magazines – these will not combust due to the high print content
- Cremated remains from another person or animal – it is advisable to mix remains following a cremation rather than before it
- Coconuts, unless they have had holes drilled in them first (they can explode otherwise and cause damage to the cremator)
- Tins, cans or aerosols
- Anything containing alcohol or other highly combustible substance
- Anything that the family may wish to recover following the cremation – it would not be possible to retrieve items following a cremation as they will be destroyed or damaged beyond recognition