

No. HLA.270/2020/352

Dated Dispur the 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2021.

ORDER

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) FOR DEAD BODY DISPOSAL OF COVID-19 POSITIVE PATIENTS

Whereas it reported that large number of deaths are occurring throughout the State in view of 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave of COVID pandemic; and

Whereas it is felt necessary to ensure that dead bodies of Covid-19 patients are cremated /buried as per rituals, the following instructions are hereby notified.

**1. Standard Precautions**

Standard infection prevention control practices should be followed at all times. These include:

1. Hand hygiene.
2. Use of personal protective equipment (e.g., water resistant apron, gloves, masks, eyewear).
3. Safe handling of sharps.
4. Disinfect bag housing dead body; instruments and devices used on the patient.
5. Disinfect linen.
6. Clean and disinfect environmental surfaces.

**2. Training in infection and prevention control practices**

All staff identified to handle dead bodies in the isolation area, mortuary, ambulance and those workers engaged in crematorium / burial ground should be trained in the infection prevention control practices.

**3. Removal of the body from the isolation room or area**

The health worker, attending to the dead body should perform hand hygiene, ensure proper use of PPE (water resistant apron, goggles, N95 mask, gloves).

- i. All tubes, drains and catheters on the dead body should be removed.
- ii. Any puncture holes or wounds (resulting from removal of catheter, drains, tubes, or otherwise) should be disinfected with 1% hypochlorite and dressed with impermeable material.
- iii. Apply caution while handling sharps such as intravenous catheters and other sharp devices. These should be disposed into a sharps container.
- iv. Plug Oral, nasal orifices of the dead body to prevent leakage of body fluids.
- v. If the family of the patient wishes to view the body at the time of removal from the isolation room or area, they may be allowed to do so with the application of Standard Precautions.

- vi. Place the dead body in leak proof plastic body bag. The exterior of the body bag can be decontaminated with 1% hypochlorite. The body bag can be wrapped with a mortuary sheet or sheet provided by the family members. The body will be either handed over to the relatives or taken to mortuary.
- vii. All used/ soiled linen should be handled with standard precautions, put in bio-hazard bag and the outer surface of the bag be disinfected with hypochlorite solution.
- viii. Used equipment should be autoclaved or decontaminated with disinfectant solutions in accordance with established infection prevention control practices.
- ix. All medical waste must be handled and disposed of in accordance with Bio-medical Waste Management Rules.
- x. The health staff who handled the body will remove personal protective equipment and will perform hand hygiene.
- xi. Provide counseling to the family members and respect their emotions and sentiments.

#### **4. Environmental cleaning and disinfection**

All surfaces of the isolation area (floors, bed, railings, side tables, IV stand, etc.) should be wiped with 1% Sodium Hypochlorite solution: allow a contact time of 30 minutes and then allowed to air dry.

#### **5. Handling of dead body in Mortuary**

Mortuary staff handling dead body (died due to COVID) should observe standard precautions.

1. Dead bodies should be stored in cold chambers maintained at approximately 4°C
2. The mortuary must be kept clean. Environmental surfaces, instruments and transport trolleys should be properly disinfected with 1% Hypochlorite solution.
3. After removing the body, the chamber door handles and floor should be cleaned with sodium hypochlorite 1% solution.
4. Embalming of dead body should not be allowed.

#### **6. Autopsies on COVID-19 dead bodies**

1. Autopsies should be avoided.
2. If autopsy is to be performed for special reasons, the standard infection prevention control practices should be adopted, along with all other measures for the protection of Health care providers.

#### **7. Transportation**

1. The body, secured in a body bag, exterior of which is decontaminated poses no additional risk to the staff transporting the dead body.
2. The personnel, handling the body, may follow standard precautions (surgical mask, gloves).
3. The vehicle, after the transfer of the body to cremation/ burial staff, will be decontaminated with 1% Sodium Hypochlorite.





4. The Deputy Commissioner shall earmark dead body carrying van(s) in the districts specifically for COVID-19 related deaths.

**8. At the crematorium/Burial Ground**

The Crematorium/ burial Ground staff should be sensitized that COVID 19 does not pose additional risk.

1. The staff will practice standard precautions of hand hygiene, use of masks and gloves.
2. Viewing of the dead body, by unzipping the face end of the body bag (to be done by the staff using standard precautions) may be allowed so that the relatives may see the body for the last time.
3. Religious rituals, such as reading from religious scripts, sprinkling holy water and any other last rites that do not require touching of the body can be allowed.
4. Bathing, kissing, hugging, etc. of the dead body should not be allowed.
5. The funeral/burial staff and family members should perform hand hygiene after cremation/ burial.
6. The ash does not pose any risk and can be collected to perform the subsequent rites.
7. Large gathering at the crematorium/ burial ground should be avoided as a social distancing measure as there is every likelihood of family contacts causing spread of virus from symptomatic/asymptomatic relatives.

**9. Financial Grant for cremation of COVID positive patients.**

In view of the difficulties communicated by Deputy Commissioners regarding cremation of deceased COVID positive persons, a fixed expenditure of Rs 5,000 per case which may be extended up to Rs.10,000/- (Rupees Ten thousand) only on cases to case basis will be allowed towards cremation expenses, if the relatives do not receive the body or they cannot bear the cremation expenses. Funds for this purpose will be provided by NHM, Assam.

**10. Responsibilities of Joint Director of Health Services and District Surveillance Officer.**

The Joint Director of Health Services of the concerned district in consultation with the District Surveillance Officer, IDSP shall supervise the disposal of Dead Bodies as per the above protocol and issue a certificate for the same to the Deputy Commissioner of the district. The Deputy Commissioner, after being satisfied that the procedure is followed thoroughly, shall report to the State Surveillance Officer, Assam and State Nodal Officer, COVID -19 Assam on compliance, within 24 hours of the incidence.



(Anurag Goel, IAS)

Principal Secretary to the Govt. of Assam,  
Health & F. W. Deptt.

Copy to:-

1. The Chief Secretary, Assam, Dispur.
2. Additional Chief Secretary, Home & Political/Social Welfare Department.
3. The Chairman Assam Administrative Tribunal.
4. The Chairman, Assam Board of Revenue.
5. The Principal Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam.
6. The DGP, Assam.
7. The Addl. DGP (Law and Order).
8. The Addl. DGP(S).
9. The Chief Executive Officer Assam State Disaster Management Authority.
10. The Mission Director, National Health Mission, Assam, Guwahati-5.
11. The Deputy Commissioner/ Sub-Divisional Officer (all Districts).
12. The Superintendent of Police (all district).
13. The Director of Health Services, Assam, Hengerabari, Guwahati-36.
14. The Director of Health Services (FW), Assam, Hengerabari, Guwahati-36.
15. The Director of Medical Education, Assam, Sixmile, Khanapara, Guwahati-22.
16. The Commissioner, Gauhati Municipal Corporation/EO, Municipality Boards (all).
17. The CEO, Zila Parishad (all Districts).
18. The Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) (all Districts).
19. The Circle Officer (all Districts).
20. The Block Development Office (all Districts).
21. The Principal-cum-Chief Superintendent all Medical Colleges of Assam.
22. The Superintendent all Medical College & Hospital, Assam.
23. The Joint Director of Health Services (all Districts).
24. All Superintendent of District Hospital
25. The SO to Chief Secretary, Assam, Dispur, Guwahati-6.
26. PS to Hon'ble Minister, Health & Family Welfare, Assam, Dispur.

By order etc.,

*(Signature)*  
24/5/2021

Joint Secretary to the Govt. of Assam,  
Health & Family Welfare Department,