



Corey Brian Strauch
Funeral Home and
Pennsylvania
Cremation Services, LLC

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS.
COMPASSIONATE CARE.
LOCAL FAMILIES.

COREY BRIAN STRAUCH
SUPERVISOR/FUNERAL DIRECTOR

A Guide for Cremation in Pennsylvania

Honoring each life in an affordable, caring way.

Clear answers, helpful information
and practical guidance for planning
ahead or when the time comes.



PLAN AHEAD
FOR PEACE OF MIND



STRAIGHTFORWARD
PRICING



LOCAL CARE
FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

SERVING PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES WITH INTEGRITY AND COMPASSION

A note from Corey



Most people plan for retirement, buy insurance, and make a will. Yet we often put off talking about what should happen when we die. I understand why. It is not an easy conversation.

After helping Pennsylvania families through difficult days, I have seen how much easier things can be when someone has made a plan. Family members know whom to call, what their loved one wanted, and what the arrangements will cost.

I created this guide to explain direct cremation in plain English: what it is, how the process works, what Pennsylvania law says about who can make decisions, and which questions to ask before signing anything.

You do not need an elaborate funeral to give someone a meaningful goodbye. You do need clear information and the freedom to choose what matters to your family.

Corey Brian Strauch

Supervisor/Funeral Director | Pennsylvania Cremation Services

My advice: Make your wishes known, put important information in one place, and tell the person who will handle your arrangements where to find it.

What is direct cremation?

Direct cremation is cremation without a formal viewing, visitation, or funeral ceremony with the body present. The funeral provider arranges transportation, required documentation, care of the deceased, cremation, and the return or disposition of the cremated remains according to the arrangement.

What direct cremation does not mean

It does not mean your family cannot hold a memorial service, a celebration of life, a church gathering, or a private ceremony. Those can take place after cremation, at a time and location that work for your family.

Why families choose it

- They prefer a simple arrangement without a formal viewing.
- They want flexibility to plan a memorial later.
- They would rather direct their money toward family, travel, a charitable gift, or a personalized gathering.
- They want clear, predictable services and pricing.

Do you need to buy a casket?

No. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Funeral Rule prohibits a funeral provider from requiring you to purchase a casket for direct cremation. An alternative container must be offered. Our Economy package includes one.

Direct cremation is a method of final disposition. How your family chooses to remember you is a separate, personal decision.

From death to cremation: the process

1 The death occurs

Hospice, a medical professional, family members, or appropriate authorities complete the necessary immediate steps, depending on where and how the death occurred.

2 Transportation into our care

After the necessary clearance, the funeral home arranges transportation from the place of death.

3 Arrangements and authorization

The person with legal authority completes arrangements and the required cremation authorization. We gather information for the death certificate and coordinate required documentation.

4 Permits and cremation

Once medical certification, authorizations, and required permits or approvals are complete, cremation can be scheduled and performed in our private crematory.

5 Processing and return

After cremation, the cremated remains are processed and prepared for return to the family. We coordinate availability of ordered death certificates.

Standard: approximately 7–10 days after the cremation permit is issued.

Expedited: approximately 5–7 days after the cremation permit is issued, for an additional \$150.

These are estimates, not guarantees; permit delays extend the overall timeline.

Death certificates may be available on a different timeline from the cremated remains. Ask our office for a current estimate.

When someone dies at home

If your loved one is under hospice care

Follow the instructions from the hospice team. Typically, the family calls the hospice nurse or hospice telephone number first. The team guides the family through pronouncement and necessary notifications, then coordinates the next steps with the chosen funeral home.

- Keep the hospice telephone number handy.
- Tell hospice which funeral home you have selected.
- Keep preplanning documents where your family can find them.

If your loved one is not under hospice care

If the death is unexpected, someone is unresponsive, or the circumstances are unclear, call 911 and follow the dispatcher's instructions. For an expected death outside hospice, contact the treating clinician or follow advance instructions. If you are unsure what to do, call 911. **Tell the dispatcher that the person has died at home and ask for guidance before moving the body.**

Emergency responders or the county coroner may need to be involved before transportation can take place. Do not move the body or disturb the scene if authorities direct you not to.

If death occurs in a hospital or care facility

Facility staff will explain their procedures and coordinate with your chosen funeral home once required steps are complete. **Even if the facility says it will contact the funeral home, follow up directly with the funeral home to confirm that contact was made.**

Planning ahead: A death at a private residence requires additional staffing and timely response. Our local-service-area residential transfer surcharge is \$350.

The first 24 hours: checklist

Keep this page with your important papers. Not everything must be handled immediately; focus first on care, required notifications, and the arrangements you have chosen.

Immediate steps

- ■ Follow hospice instructions, or call 911 when appropriate.
- ■ Contact your chosen funeral home.
- ■ Locate any existing cremation or preplanning paperwork.
- ■ Identify who has legal authority to make arrangements.
- ■ Notify immediate family and anyone who needs to know right away.

Gather useful information

- ■ Locate identification and the Social Security number.
- ■ Find military discharge documents, if applicable.
- ■ Gather information needed for the death certificate.
- ■ Discuss how many certified death certificates to order.
- ■ Keep copies of contracts, receipts, and authorizations.

Take care of practical matters

- ■ Arrange care for pets and secure the home.
- ■ Keep track of immediate expenses and key contacts.
- ■ Schedule memorial decisions for later if your family needs more time.

You do not need to settle the entire estate or plan every detail of a memorial service on the first day.

Who can authorize cremation in Pennsylvania?

Pennsylvania law addresses authority over final disposition in 20 Pa.C.S. § 305. The answer depends on family circumstances, any legally effective instructions or documents, and whether someone challenges another person's authority.

A surviving spouse

A surviving spouse generally has sole authority, subject to specific legal exceptions and challenges. Living apart does not automatically eliminate a spouse's authority.

When there is no surviving spouse

Authority generally falls to the next of kin under the statutory framework. Adult children may have equal standing; age, proximity, and who made the initial phone call do not automatically decide the issue.

What if the person left written wishes?

In Pennsylvania, a legally effective **statement of contrary intent** can be relevant to final-disposition decisions. A will or other legally recognized document or designation may also affect the analysis. If you want a particular person to handle your arrangements, speak with a Pennsylvania attorney about documenting that choice properly.

What about power of attorney?

A power of attorney used during life does not, by itself, establish the right to authorize cremation after death. The rules governing disposition must still be considered.

Plan now: Tell your family what you want, identify who will be responsible, and address foreseeable disagreements before a death occurs.

Source: 20 Pa.C.S. § 305, Right to dispose of a decedent's remains. This overview is educational, not legal advice.

When family members disagree

Scenario 1: A spouse and adult children

Dad dies. His spouse wants cremation, but an adult child wants burial. The spouse generally has authority unless a legally supported exception applies. The child does not automatically have an equal vote.

Scenario 2: Two adult children

An unmarried mother dies. Her two adult children have equal standing and disagree. Neither automatically wins because they are older or live closer. Pennsylvania law provides for court resolution in specified disagreements.

Scenario 3: Three adult children

A father dies without a spouse. Three equally situated adult children disagree; two support cremation. The law includes a majority-decision rule for more than two people with equal standing, subject to its requirements and any relevant legal challenge.

Scenario 4: A long-separated spouse

A couple lived apart for years but remained legally married. Separation alone does not settle who has authority. Pennsylvania law provides a procedure for specified challenges, including enduring estrangement.

Important: Some challenges have short statutory filing periods. If you anticipate a dispute, contact a Pennsylvania attorney promptly rather than relying on a general guide.

Source: 20 Pa.C.S. § 305. These simplified examples are not a determination of any particular family's legal rights.

Our Economy Cremation Package

Our approach is simple: explain what you receive and what may cost extra, before you make arrangements.

\$945

Economy Direct Cremation

Included in the \$945 package

- Basic services of funeral director and staff; online or telephone arrangement conference.
- Transfer from a facility in Lackawanna, Luzerne, Wayne, Pike, or Monroe County.
- Refrigeration until the time of cremation.
- Cremation in our private crematory.
- Alternative cremation container.

Additional charges when applicable

- \$100: Facility transfer from Lehigh, Northampton, Carbon, Susquehanna, or Montour County.
- \$350: Residential transfer within our local service area. Not available in the extended service areas.
- \$150: Expedited service.

Refrigeration is included until cremation. There is no additional daily refrigeration charge under this package. Standard turnaround: 7–10 days; expedited: 5–7 days. Both estimates begin after the cremation permit is issued.

Certified death certificates and other items not expressly listed are not included by implication. Ask for a complete written statement of selected services and total charges.

Compare the full price—not just the headline

Two providers can advertise “direct cremation” while including different services. Use these questions to compare written prices before making a decision.

Provider comparison worksheet

- Advertised price _____
- Funeral director services included? _____
- Transportation from facility included? _____
- Residential transfer charge? _____
- Crematory charge included? _____
- Alternative container included? _____
- Refrigeration included until cremation? _____
- Permit or administrative charges? _____
- County coroner cremation-permit fee? _____
- Certified death certificates extra? _____
- Estimated completion time? _____
- How are remains returned? _____

County permit fees: Each county coroner issues its own cremation permit. Fees may vary by county; ask your provider for the current charge. Budget approximately \$50–\$80 where applicable, but confirm the actual amount before making arrangements.

Your consumer rights: Under the FTC Funeral Rule, you can request itemized prices and select goods and services, subject to applicable requirements. Funeral providers must provide a written statement of your selections and costs after arrangements are made.

Source: FTC, “Shopping for Funeral Services” and the Funeral Rule.

Why cremation prices vary

The word “cremation” does not always describe the whole funeral arrangement. A direct cremation package and a traditional funeral followed by cremation are different combinations of services.

A direct cremation arrangement

Generally concentrates on transportation, arrangements, necessary care, documentation, cremation, and return or disposition of the cremated remains. A formal viewing or ceremony with the body present is not part of direct cremation.

A traditional funeral followed by cremation

May include embalming, visitation, use of funeral-home facilities, a ceremony, additional staff, and a casket or rental casket, followed by cremation. Those additional selections affect the total price.

Five things to know before you buy

- A casket is not required for direct cremation.
- Embalming is not routinely required in every case; specific circumstances can affect requirements.
- Ask for an itemized price list and a written statement of your selections.
- You may purchase certain merchandise, including urns, from another seller.
- You can choose direct cremation and arrange a memorial independently.

A meaningful goodbye is personal. Spend on the services and traditions that matter to your family—not simply on what appears in a package.

Consumer information: FTC Funeral Rule.

Documents your family should locate

A little organization now can save your family hours of searching later. Tell a trusted person where to find the following information and documents.

Information often needed for death registration

- Full legal name; date and place of birth; Social Security number.
- Parents' names, including mother's name at birth.
- Marital status and spouse information.
- Education, occupation, and military service details.
- Contact details for the person legally authorized to make arrangements.

Other useful documents

- ☐ Photo identification
- ☐ Existing funeral or cremation arrangements
- ☐ Will and trust documents
- ☐ Life insurance policies
- ☐ Marriage certificate
- ☐ Military discharge papers (DD Form 214)
- ☐ Cemetery or memorial-property documents
- ☐ Advance directives and related instructions
- ☐ Attorney and financial adviser contact information

How many death certificates?

Certified death certificates may be needed for insurance, estate administration, and financial accounts. Make a list of institutions that require one and ask whether they need a certificate with medical information. Not every organization requires an original.

Keep a one-page list of where important documents are stored. Avoid putting passwords or sensitive account numbers in an unsecured planning packet.

Veterans: benefits to ask about

If you or your loved one served in the military, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs may provide burial or memorial benefits. Choosing direct cremation does not automatically disqualify an eligible veteran.

Potential benefits

- Military funeral honors: Available to qualifying veterans, subject to eligibility requirements.
- Burial flag: A flag may be available for eligible veterans.
- National cemetery: Eligible veterans and certain family members may qualify for burial or inurnment.
- Headstone or marker: Government memorial benefits may be available.
- Presidential Memorial Certificate: Available to eligible families.
- Burial allowance: Some families may qualify for financial assistance or reimbursement.

What should you do now?

Locate the veteran's DD Form 214 or other service documents. Tell the funeral home about the person's military service and contact the VA to confirm eligibility for each benefit.

Official resource: va.gov/burials-memorials/
VA benefits telephone: 800-827-1000

Eligibility varies by service record, discharge status, benefit, and other circumstances.

Social Security after a death

Social Security may be an important source of financial support for eligible surviving family members. Benefits depend on the deceased person's work history and the survivor's circumstances.

Monthly survivor benefits

Depending on eligibility, benefits may be available to surviving spouses, certain divorced spouses, children, and some dependent parents. Rules vary based on age, disability, and care of qualifying children.

The \$255 lump-sum death payment

A qualifying surviving spouse—or certain children when there is no eligible spouse—may receive a one-time \$255 death payment. The application deadline is generally two years after death.

Reporting the death is not applying for benefits

Funeral homes generally report deaths to Social Security. Surviving family members should still contact Social Security to ask about benefits and apply when appropriate.

What happens to the deceased person's payment?

Social Security benefits are not payable for the month of death. If a payment is received for that month or later, contact Social Security or the financial institution about returning it.

Social Security Administration
1-800-772-1213
ssa.gov/personal-record/when-someone-dies

This page is general information. Social Security determines eligibility and payment amounts.

10 questions before choosing a provider

A good cremation provider should welcome clear questions. Take this list with you when you call.

1. What is the total price?

Ask for a written estimate including any charges that apply to your situation.

2. What is included?

Confirm transportation, staff services, container, refrigeration, and cremation.

3. Where will my loved one be cared for?

Ask where the deceased will be taken.

4. Who performs the cremation?

Find out whether the provider operates its own crematory.

5. Are there transportation surcharges?

Ask about residential transfers and travel outside the normal service area.

6. How much refrigeration is included?

Ask about charges if documentation causes a delay.

7. What paperwork is required?

Ask about authorizations, medical certification, and permits.

8. How long should the process take?

Confirm when the turnaround clock starts.

9. How will the remains be returned?

Ask about the included container, pickup, delivery, or shipping.

10. Can I plan or prepay now?

Ask for current preplanning terms and how prepaid funds are handled.

Never feel uncomfortable asking for a General Price List or an itemized explanation. A clear answer now can prevent confusion later.

Give your family one less thing to worry about

You have learned how direct cremation works, what to ask, how to compare costs, and which documents your family may need. The next step is turning that information into a plan.

Plan ahead with Pennsylvania Cremation Services

Our current Economy Direct Cremation Package is \$945 for qualifying at-need arrangements. Additional charges may apply. Prepaid arrangements have their own contract terms and current pricing, which we will explain before you commit.

Plan online: pennsylvaniacremationservices.com

Request preplanning paperwork or ask questions: 570-843-5190

Visit: 602 Birch Street, Scranton, PA 18505

Want to learn more?



The Truth About Cremation

Our companion book explores the cremation process and the questions families should ask before making arrangements. Contact our office to request a copy.

Important: This guide is educational and is not legal, medical, tax, or financial advice. Laws, benefits, prices, and policies can change. Consult the relevant agency or professional about your circumstances.

Official resources: Pennsylvania 20 Pa.C.S. §305 (palegis.us); FTC Funeral Rule (ftc.gov); VA burial benefits (va.gov/burials-memorials); Social Security survivor benefits (ssa.gov).