



Questions About Deceased Coronavirus Patients and Funeral Preparation are Answered

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
May 1 2020 10:15 AM



ALTON - Word has circulated around social media that coronavirus patients who die must be cremated, but long-time Alton funeral director Ralph Bowles said that is not the case on Wednesday.

It is true, that the Chinese government ordered swift cremation of patients who died after contracting the coronavirus.

Bowles, of Gent Funeral Home in Alton, said the rumor that COVID-19 patients who die must be cremated in the U.S. mirrors what spread in the 1980s when the AIDS epidemic began. The AIDS epidemic officially started in June 1981 and raged at the beginning.

"It was a common misconception during the AIDS epidemic that anyone with AIDS had to be cremated," Bowles said. "Some of the same misconceptions have come with COVID-19. The CDC has determined that embalming does kill the virus."

"Funeral homes have to treat each deceased person in the same way," Bowles said. "As an example, somebody could have COVID-19 and die in a car wreck not knowing they had the disease."

Bowles explained that intricate safety procedures and equipment are in place for any death funeral homes process.

"I graduated in the 1980s with the AIDS scare and before that old-time embalmers often didn't even wear gloves," he said.

Bowles stressed the AIDS epidemic changed everything in regard to the safety procedures.

The CDC stresses that Personal Protective Equipment (PPC) is critically important to embalmer protection in COVID-19 and other infectious cases.

Bowles spoke of two COVID-19 deaths he handled in the Gent Crematory and said both families chose cremation for their loved ones.

In the next interview with Ralph Bowles, he converses about the new drive-thru visitation and several changes with visitations and funerals because of COVID-19.

.