

What Happens to Unclaimed Bodies?

John A. Gentleman Mortuaries and Crematory in Omaha, NE



An unclaimed body is a deceased person who has no known next of kin or claimant, the next of kin refuses to claim the body, or simply remains unidentified even after an investigation.

The reasons a body may be unclaimed are varied, but the fact remains that cases of unclaimed bodies are on the rise. Sometimes bodies are unclaimed due to a lack of known family or family rifts that cause family members to become estranged. However, in many cases, bodies are unclaimed because families are worried about financial expectations. Even if a family is identified, they are not required to claim the body.

If no family comes forward to claim the body and none is found through an investigation, then the government will become responsible for the interment. How long this investigation is required to last differs by province, but in Ontario, it is 10 days. After this time, if no family or next of kin has come forward and no evidence of estate or burial plans can be found, the deceased is turned over to the local municipality for burial.

This is one reason why making funeral prearrangements is very helpful. By prearranging your funeral and setting aside funds to pay for it, you take the financial burden off your family members. You can plan as much or as little of the services as you choose, but it is often a great idea to meet with a funeral planner if possible. There are many options available and by meeting with a funeral planner you can get an idea of what the associated costs are with your chosen options. If you choose, you can also prepay for your funeral at that time as well.

If you would like to get started planning your funeral arrangements, talk to your funeral director.