

Joint Guidance - Best Practice Guidance for Infant Cremation – England and Wales

The Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities (FBCA), the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM), the Cremation Society of Great Britain (CSGB) and the Association of Private Crematoria and Cemeteries (APCC) recommend that all cremation authorities involved in the cremation of babies and Infants (including Non-Viable Fetal Remains) must make use of the best available techniques to maximise the recovery of ashes from cremation.

The FBCA, ICCM, CSGB and APCC already recognise the Infant Cremation Commission 2014 (Scotland) definition that ashes are “all that is left in the cremator at the end of the cremation process, and following the removal of any metal.” It is advised that consent is obtained to separately dispose of metal removed from ashes in a legally acceptable manner.

In order to maximise the recovery of ashes, we recommend that cremation authorities familiarise themselves with their cremation equipment and operating manuals, specifically in relation to the cremation of babies and infants. In addition, where fitted they should use a relevant computer programme, usually referred to as fetal or infant setting, for all infant cremations.

We also recommend the use of a metal tray, in which the coffin is placed prior to introduction into the cremator chamber. In some cases the sides of the tray may need to be of a greater height than those of a standard tray in order to reduce the risk of turbulence within the tray and avoid any of the very light and fragile ashes being lost. Ideally, the tray containing the coffin should be placed in a position where it can be observed by the technician throughout the cremation process but not be put directly under the burner. Where necessary and when turbulence in the cremation chamber is experienced, an element of manual control can be adopted in order to reduce turbulence and potential loss of ash.

It is appreciated that the tray will be hot prior to removal from the cremator, however, proper training and methodology should minimise any risk to the operator during this process. Many crematoria have been using trays for over 25 years without concern and a detailed risk assessment along with the use of appropriate PPE and equipment should ensure that the risk of injury is minimised. Advice regarding appropriate Risk Assessments can be obtained from the ICCM or FBCA.

Overnight cremations with the cremator turned off should not be considered, as these would contravene the conditions within the cremation authority’s environmental permit.

Where the cremator computer control system is not fitted with a fetal setting, the tray containing the baby’s coffin should be placed onto the hearth in a position that is not directly under the primary chamber burner unit, and the Technician should carefully monitor the cremation to ensure good combustion whilst avoiding as far as possible any undue turbulence within the chamber. The technician should remain vigilant and if necessary adopt manual override of burner and air controls in order to minimise turbulence within the cremation chamber.



If a coffin is too large for the tray and necessitates it being placed directly onto the hearth, it should not be placed directly under the primary chamber burner. This applies whether or not the computer control system is fitted with a baby setting. The technician should remain vigilant and adopt if necessary manual override of burner and air controls in order to minimise turbulence within the cremation chamber. Consideration should be given to purchasing a larger than standard tray for use with a large baby coffin.

Once cooled, the ashes should be carefully collected and processed ready for final disposal in accordance with the instructions received from the Applicant for Cremation. It might not be appropriate to process the very small amount of ash recovered through a cremulator as the potential exists for some or all of the ash to be lost. In such circumstance reduction by hand, e.g. using a mortar and pestle, might be more appropriate. In the majority of cases metal will be removed from the ashes however separate consent for the disposal of metal should be obtained.

Technicians should possess the FBCA TEST certificate or the accredited CTTS BTEC Intermediate qualification provided by the ICCM. Both training courses currently include sections dedicated to baby and infant cremations.

