



Common Health Concerns About **CREMATORY OPERATIONS**

Cremation releases small amounts of chemicals into the air, but not at levels that can harm your health.

What is cremation?

Over a lifetime, humans are exposed to many chemicals, which are stored in fat and tissue throughout the body. Cremation burns a body to ashes and releases these chemicals at extremely low levels during that process. When released into the air, most chemicals are broken down quickly by sunlight or are diluted and carried by the wind.



By 2030, the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) estimates that 70.6% of all consumers will choose cremation over burial.

Which chemicals are released into the air during cremation?

- Dioxins are released into outdoor air during cremation in very small amounts. Studies show that crematory releases of even the most toxic dioxins are not expected to harm your health.
- Mercury releases are sometimes a concern for nearby residents. Mercury often comes from dental fillings. It becomes a gas (vapor) when burned during cremation. The levels of mercury emitted from a crematory are considered low and do not pose a health risk. Mercury releases are not regulated in Georgia.
- Extremely small amounts of lead, cadmium, hydrochloric acid, nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, and carbon monoxide are also released during cremation. The small amounts of these chemicals emitted during operations will not affect outdoor or indoor air quality.

What about noise or odors from crematoria?

Unpleasant odors and loud noises may come from crematoria. They will not harm your health but are nuisance issues and may affect your comfort and quality of life.



Residents concerned about noise, odor, or other nuisances in their neighborhoods should refer to local nuisance ordinances or contact their local code enforcement offices.

Who regulates crematories in Georgia?

- There are no federal or state environmental regulations for crematories. Studies conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) show that crematory emissions (substances discharged into the air) are at levels below regulatory and health guidelines.
- Crematories are licensed and inspected by the Secretary of State under the “Official Code of Georgia Annotated; Title 43, Professions and Businesses; Chapter 18, Funeral Directors and Establishments, Embalmers, and Crematories” (<http://rules.sos.state.ga.us>).
- The capacity, location, odors, noise, and hours of operation of a crematory are governed by local zoning ordinances.

Helpful Resources

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Toxic Substances Portal

www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp

For More Information

Georgia Department of Public Health

Environmental Health Section

Georgia Safe Siting Program

(404) 657-6534

www.dph.ga.gov/chemical-hazards

Rev. 05/2020