

## Risk Assessment for Transporting Coffins at St Albans Woodland Burial Ground

When undertakers are using the woodland burial ground it is expected that they will have undergone training in correct procedures for manual handling commensurate with moving heavy coffins.

The following risk assessment, based on the TILE acronym, which we expect all Funeral Directors will understand, is considered important. All users and undertakers must ensure that these are adhered to in order to minimise the inherent risks which must be considered before attempting to move a coffin from a vehicle into a grave.

**T – Task.** This means considering the manual handling activity itself, i.e. the lifting, lowering, carrying, pushing or pulling, and looking at how it may affect your health and safety. The task of moving a coffin involves strenuous movements over a distance long distances and may involve uneven weight distribution. The weight of coffin need to be carefully considered to avoid injury.

**I – Individual.** This means considering the numbers and capacity of the persons who will be carrying out the manual handling activity. Professional Bearers may be assessed as strong and suitably fit. However if families wish to be involved they must be suitably assessed for strength and capability and they must be given clear training and instructions by the undertaker.

**L – Load.** Since a team of people will always be required they must be given clear instructions as to how to hold the coffin. They weight must be borne evenly to ensure that one person is not taking more weight than others. If carrying the coffin at shoulder height there should be additional assistance to raise the coffin. It is recommended that the coffin be carried at waist height or a wheeled trolley is used if there is a team of people who might not easily bear the weight.

**E – Environment.** This means considering the area in which the load is being moved, and looking at how this could make the manual handling task unsafe. Clear instructions must be give as to the route to be taken and this should be agreed on site before the coffin is removed from the vehicle. The route should be checked for trip hazards since the paths are usually only grass and may be uneven and slippery when wet. It is essential that bearers and mourners have correct footwear which should be sturdy and waterproof depending on weather conditions Clear instruction must be given by the undertaker so that everybody is aware of the route to be taken and any obstacles to avoid.

Undertakers have full responsibility for movement of the coffin into the grave. They must ensure that they have considered all of the factors involved in TILE. However the Trustees of St Albans Woodland Burial also have a duty of care for people using the woodland. If the person appointed by the Trustees to supervise arrangements at the time of burial does not believe that adequate Health and Safety procedures are being upheld they are required by the Trustees to stop any burial until such time as they are satisfied.