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Nelson End of Life Society

Gone for Good Package

Our *Gone for Good* package is a list of government, legal and practical tasks that need attention after someone dies. It is helpful to those left behind to have it completed before death. The intention is to reduce stress in the time following a death when emotions are intense.

Three scenarios are presented

- a An expected death at home
- b An unexpected death
- c An accidental death

Although every death is unique, the instructions are in simple (and occasionally tedious) steps. There are tasks for the short term and for the long haul.

An appendix provides helpful forms and contact information.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IN THE IMMEDIATE MOMENTS AFTER AN EXPECTED DEATH.....	2
IN THE IMMEDIATE MOMENTS AFTER AN UNEXPECTED 'NATURAL' DEATH.....	3
IN THE IMMEDIATE MOMENTS AFTER AN UNEXPECTED/ACCIDENTAL DEATH.....	4
NOTIFYING VITAL STATISTICS.....	5
IF THE BODY IS TO BE CREMATED.....	6
THE SHORT HAUL.....	7
THE LONG HAUL.....	8
GLOSSARY / APPENDIX.....	9

VITAL STATISTICS FORM



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Nelson End of Life Society

IN THE IMMEDIATE MOMENTS AFTER AN EXPECTED DEATH

These instructions are assuming that there has been someone who has prepared for their death at home. There must be an **Expected Death in Home** form filled out and on the premise.

- 1) Do not call 911 Emergency Services, as they are obligated to try to resuscitate.
- 2) Make sure the person is dead.
 - a) Check for a pulse at the carotid artery.
 - b) Check to see if the pupils contract, when shining a flashlight in them. They won't after death.
 - c) Put a mirror or other reflective surface under the nose and look for visual signs of breath.
 - d) Wait one hour to see if breathing resumes.
- 3) Note the time of death or your best estimate
- 4) Stay present, say farewells, do any desired rituals, take your time, breathe, and be present to the magnitude of the moment.
- 5) Call a friend for support. Try to find the deceased's **Good to Go** kit to make it easier to fill in the forms to be submitted to Vital Statistics (see page 2).
- 6) Begin cooling the body. Open windows, arrange to get techni-ice as soon as possible - if you have not made prior arrangements. Cover the body fully with a sheet; and remove any insulating blankets.
- 7) Call next of kin and/or family.
- 8) Notify the medical practitioner who issued the **Expected Death in Home** form. Take whatever time you need. You can notify them in the morning if the death occurs at night. The medical practitioner will fax or email a **Medical Certificate of Death** to the 'funeral director'.
- 9) Anyone you choose can be the 'funeral director' (they cannot charge money or be paid, unless they are a BC registered funeral director). The original **Medical Certificate of Death** will be mailed to the person you designate as 'funeral director'.



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IN THE IMMEDIATE MOMENTS AFTER AN UNEXPECTED 'NATURAL' DEATH

1. MAKE SURE THE PERSON IS DEAD.
 - a. Check for a pulse at the carotid artery.
 - b. Check to see if the pupils contract when shining a flashlight in them. They won't after death.
 - c. Put a mirror or other reflective surface under the nose and look for visual signs of breath.
 - d. If you have ANY doubts, skip directly to Step # 6
2. If you are not the next of kin, call them.
3. Wait one hour to see if breathing resumes.
4. Note the time of death or your best estimate.
5. Stay present, say farewells, do any desired rituals, take your time, breathe, and be present to the magnitude of the moment.
6. Call BC Ambulance Services at 911. If you are sure the person is dead, SAY SO. If there is a Do Not Resuscitate form posted in the home, be sure to mention that as well. Otherwise when the First Responders come, they will be obliged to try to resuscitate. If you say the person is dead, the police and/or coroner may come over instead of the First Responders. It is most likely that the body will be taken.
7. Call a friend for support. Try to find the deceased's Good to Go kit, so you will be able to answer questions.
8. If the officials will be delayed in coming over, and the weather is hot, then begin cooling the body. Open windows, arrange to get ice, if necessary. Cover the body fully with a sheet; and remove any insulating blankets.
9. When the police and/or coroner come, they will take over.
10. Notify the funeral home (if they are to be used), as they can if you request, receive the body once the coroner is finished.
 - a) If you are picking up the body from the funeral home or the coroner, you will need to have the Private Transfer Permit and Burial Certificate from Service BC in your possession.
 - b) You will have to show up with a totally enclosed vehicle (the casket must not be visible to the public) and either a purchased casket from the funeral home or your own casket. If you use a homemade casket it must be leak-proof.
 - c) The body must be transported with respect and in a manner that does not cause a health hazard.



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IN THE IMMEDIATE MOMENTS AFTER AN UNEXPECTED / ACCIDENTAL DEATH

1. Whenever you discover the victim, call 911. Be sure to clearly tell the operator, if the person is dead. If you are not sure:
 - a. Check for a pulse at the carotid artery.
 - b. Check to see if the pupils contract when shining a flashlight in them. They won't after death.
 - c. Put a mirror or other reflective surface under the nose and look for visual signs of breath.
 - d. Administer whatever lifesaving first aid, CPR, etc. is appropriate.
2. DO NOT MOVE THE BODY or touch it any further.
3. If you are not the next of kin, call them.
4. Call a friend for support. While you await the arrival of the first responders/officials, try to find the deceased's Good to Go kit, so that you will be able to answer questions.
5. When the police and/or coroner come, they will take over.
6. Notify the funeral home, if you have chosen to use them, as they will receive the body once the coroner is finished.
7. If you are taking care of the body, the authorities will contact you when it is to be released. Be aware that if the body has been transferred to the funeral home, they will charge a storage fee.
 - a) If you are picking up the body, you will need to have the Private Transfer Permit and Burial Certificate from Service BC in your possession.
 - b) You will have to show up with a totally enclosed vehicle (the casket must not be visible to the public) and either a purchased casket from the funeral home or your own casket. If you use a homemade casket it must be leak-proof.
 - c) The body must be transported with respect and in a manner that does not cause a health hazard.



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NOTIFYING VITAL STATISTICS

1. In this package there is a **Vital Statistics** form that can be filled out prior to the death.
2. Find 2 pieces of the deceased's ID. Do the best you can to provide ID. Sometimes it's not perfect. Acceptable forms of ID:
 - a) Primary (in order of preference)
 1. Birth Certificate (we want the death to link to the Canadian birth and that is why this piece is critical)
 2. Citizenship card/certificate or immigration documents (if not born in Canada - the death is registered in the name the Federal Government knows them as).
 3. Permanent Residency Card
 4. Passport
 - b) Secondary (in order of preference) - use only if no primary ID is available;
 1. BC Driver's License and Services Card (combined card)
 2. BC Services Card
 3. BC ID card
 4. Canadian Driver's License
 5. Care Card
3. Fill in the **Registration of Death** form from the best informant available. If you have none of these sources, do your best.
 Other people who might be able to help you with the necessary information could be:
 - The nearest living relative of the deceased person present at the death or last illness;
 - Any relative of the deceased;
 - Any adult present at the death, if no relative is available;
 - Another adult having knowledge of the facts;
 - An adult occupying the premises where the death occurred.
 Be sure to fill in the section "to be completed by the Funeral Director only." Leave the "burial permit number" empty. The Vital Statistics Agency will fill this in. The date of burial/disposition **MUST BE** at least 48 hours after the time of death. The actual burial (or cremation) doesn't need to take place on this date, but it **CANNOT** be done earlier than you specify.
4. Locate either the original, or the printed email, or the faxed copy of the **Medical Certificate of Death**, which the doctor or medical practitioner sent you.



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5. Now you are ready to go to Service BC to register the death so you can obtain a Transfer Permit and Burial Certificate.

Services BC
310 Ward Street
Nelson, BC

To recap the 3 things you need to bring with you:

1. Two (2) pieces of ID
2. Vital Statistics form
3. Medical Certificate of death

If the body is to be cremated:

1. Notify your funeral home. Thompsons Funeral Home 250 - 352 - 3615
2. You may choose to wash the body yourselves. If the body is already at the funeral home, you will need to arrange this with them.
3. Make arrangements to buy the cremation casket from the funeral home or use your homemade casket.
4. You do have the option of transporting the body to the crematorium with a **Private Transfer Permit**, the **Medical Certificate of Death**, and a proper vehicle.
5. The funeral home will supply several items to be signed by the next of kin. If it was an expected death at home, they will also need a copy of the **Expected Death in Home** form.
6. Once the cremation is finished, you will be given the cremated remains to dispose of according to the deceased's wishes. Please note that if the deceased specified what they wanted you to do with the cremated remains in their will, you legally must do as they asked, if it is reasonably possible to do so. Your funeral home may also be able to help you with some of the government paperwork and notifications to local newspapers. There will be costs involved.



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THE SHORT HAUL

The following are tasks to be accomplished sometime in the very near future.

- Gather all important documents in one place. The deceased's **Good to Go** kit should help you locate them.
- Secure the property, if it is now vacant. Lock up the home and vehicles. Make arrangements for pets, if the deceased didn't indicate a plan.
- Contact immediate family and friends
- Make arrangements for a funeral and/or memorial gathering. Get your friends to help. And spread the word about it.
- Decide about a headstone - if burial will take place at the cemetery.
- Continue to notify additional family and friends.
- Prepare an obituary and have it published. Be aware of possible identity theft or theft of property, so don't include details such as a day and month of birth (use only the year) or addresses. Note: Obituaries can be expensive.
- If you are so inclined, keep a list of people who sent cards, flowers, or donations, so that you can send thank you notes later.



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THE LONG HAUL

This section is written as if you are the surviving spouse. However, you may be the friend or executor, who is settling the affairs of the deceased. In that case, you may be closing accounts rather than switching names on them, etc.

- Follow the British Columbia Bereavement Checklist in the appendix very carefully to be sure that you notify all important agencies.
- Do NOT overlook the final list on page 6 of that same document, which details other places/institutions you may need to notify.
- Secure the services of a lawyer, accountant, and/or financial advisor to settle the deceased's affairs, if necessary.
- Order at least 2 copies of the **British Columbia Death Certificate**. This can be arranged through the funeral home (if you use one), Vital Statistics or a Service BC office.
- If you are the surviving spouse and/or if there are surviving children, be sure to ask any pension plans if there are any spousal or child benefits available (e.g. CPP-death benefit, GIS-Widowed Spouse Allowance, Veterans, etc.)
- Notify and/or cancel any memberships or online accounts with regular fees.
- Make a life insurance claim, if a policy exists.
- If you were not a co-habitant with the deceased, notify the Post Office to forward all mail to you.
- Contact Equifax (1-800-465-7166) and TransUnion (1-800-663-9980), which are Canada's two credit bureaus. Notify them of the death to prevent fraudulent credit claims. And request credit reports for the deceased to make sure you are aware of all existing debts.
- Notify current and past employers to see if there are any benefits that might apply to you, as the surviving spouse.
- Change all joint accounts and credit cards to your name only, if you are the surviving spouse.
- Talk with your lawyer, if you and your spouse owned land/property jointly. You may need to put it in your name alone.
- Be sure all bills and insurance policies are transferred into your name, as the surviving spouse. If you are not able to pay all the bills immediately, contact the creditors about the possibility of delaying payment due to the circumstances.
- Cancel email and website accounts, particularly social media accounts to avoid identity theft.
- If your spouse was a beneficiary on your will, insurance policies, bank accounts, or retirement plan, change the name of the beneficiary on them.
- If your spouse was named representative on your RA5 or RA7, change them.
- Revise your own will and your Power of Attorney.



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GLOSSARY / APPENDIX

Expected Death at Home: This form is available from your family physician. Once completed and signed, you keep it at home. It is only valid for a 3-month period. It is best to put it on the front of the fridge so as to be immediately visible.

Medical Certificate of Death: This certificate is issued by the doctor or medical practitioner, who pronounces the death. It is sent to the person, who is designated as the 'funeral director'. This form is required for transporting the body.

Registration of Death: You get this form from Vital Statistics BC. It is filled in and then returned to Vital Statistics in order to get the Burial Certificate.

Burial Certificate: This certificate permits the body to be buried. It is sent from Vital Statistics to you at Services BC.

Private Transfer Permit: The application for this permit, when completed, is sent to Consumer Protection BC. The permit itself will be sent to the person designated on the form (through Services BC). This permit is required for transporting the body.

British Columbia Death Certificate: This certificate can be ordered from Vital Statistics, the funeral home you work with, or at the Services BC office. You will need multiple copies when you are settling the deceased's affairs with the banks, etc. Some institutions will accept copies, others will require originals.

British Columbia Bereavement Checklist - This list may be found at: www2.gov.bc.ca or if you are on a computer this is the link: [What To Do When Someone Dies](#)



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