UNIT 10

Final Planning Prior to Conducting the Funeral

Unit Purpose:

This unit describes the knowledge and performance outcomes required to develop learners’ understanding for planning prior to and on the day of the funeral. This unit has four learning outcomes and four activities.

INTRO
UNIT 1
UNIT 2
UNIT 3
UNIT 4
UNIT 5
UNIT 6
UNIT 7
UNIT 8
UNIT 9
UNIT 10
UNIT 11
UNIT 12

UNIT 10 - Final Planning Prior to Conducting the Funeral

Introduction

Activity 1
Before starting this unit, take time to think about the process of arranging for the day of the funeral. Describe some of the last minute checks which need to be performed prior to the funeral taking place. **Upload to your portfolio**

Learning outcome	Unit criteria
1	Understand the benefits of contingency planning prior to the day of the funeral
2	Understand the need to cross-check identification of the deceased
3	Know how to arrange floral tributes and dress the coffin
4	Understand the final checks prior to conducting the funeral

Activity 2
Make a list of all the things that could potentially go wrong in the preparation of the funeral. Note what preventative action you could take for each potential problem / disaster! **Upload to your portfolio**

UNIT 10 - LO1.0 Understand the benefits of contingency planning prior to the day of the funeral

There are a few occasions when even the best laid plans go awry. There will be items left behind, for example:

- A floral tribute is left at the premises and noticed by a member of the family, rather than shrugging and saying "Oh well ", arranging for the flowers to be brought to the service and being available for the family to see will disperse the situation.
- A hearse that will not start cannot easily be remedied and there are very few companies who have hearses available to bring out at a moment's notice. But honesty and decisiveness will disperse most situations that the conductor comes across.

If things go wrong, the majority of families require an apology not a refund and quick action by the conductor/funeral director perhaps will show leadership. Sadly, negativity of experience spreads much quicker than experiencing a flawless service. Come the day of the funeral there will have been elements already organised, the coffin, flowers, doves, a piper or bugler and hymn / song sheets for example, but all of these elements will need to be pulled together in order for the funeral to run smoothly.

Contingency planning is a "What if?" skill important in all types of planning activities.

The objective of contingency planning is not to identify and develop a plan for every possible contingency. That would be impossible and a waste of time. Rather, the objective is to think about major contingencies and possible responses. Few situations actually unfold according to the assumptions of a plan.

Funeral directors who have given thought to contingencies and possible responses are more likely to successfully plan and conduct the funeral.

- Address all funeral related-critical activities – No matter where your contingency planning starts, a good plan identifies critical operational functions, and it outlines a way to minimize the risks occurring
- Identify risks – The first part of an effective risk analysis is to identify the various risks that the funeral may face.

What has the potential to significantly disrupt or harm the planning and conducting of the funeral? The end result of a risk analysis is usually a huge list of potential threats. If you try to produce a contingency plan for each, you may be overwhelmed.

- Prioritising risks – One of the greatest challenges of contingency planning is making sure you don't over plan too much!

You need a careful balance between over preparation for something that may never happen, and adequate preparation so that you can respond quickly and effectively to a crisis situation when necessary.

To prompt your thinking and form the basis of your contingency plan, the following information aims to assist you:

- Consider events that possibly could occur pre and post funeral that would require a response?
- What potential disasters might happen just before or during the funeral?
- What is the worst-case scenario of events for the situation?
- What scenarios are possible for the situation?
- What event would cause the greatest disruption; how could it be avoided?
- Who or what might impede implementation of the plan?

Use these principles in your risk assessment and contingency planning process.

INTRO
UNIT 1
UNIT 2
UNIT 3
UNIT 4
UNIT 5
UNIT 6
UNIT 7
UNIT 8
UNIT 9
UNIT 10
UNIT 11
UNIT 12

UNIT 10 - LO1.1 Understand the benefits of contingency planning prior to the day of the funeral

Developing the Contingency Plan - Guidelines

Remember these guidelines when it's time to prepare your contingency plan. Your main goal is to maintain funeral business operations. Look closely at what you need to do to deliver excellent client service before, during and after the funeral service. Planning of:

- Organising – the funeral service team, clients and mourners
- Assessing – risks and opportunities to avoid
- Critical Thinking – identifying and evaluating solutions for feasibility prior to implementation.
- Delegating - roles, responsibilities and levels of authority, as appropriate, to other team members where appropriate
- Communicating, Negotiating and Reviewing with clients, external contacts and team members
- Time Management.

Define time periods – What must be done during the first hour of the plan being implemented? The first day? The first week? If you break down the plan, you're less likely to leave out important details. Identify the triggers – What specifically will cause you to implement the contingency plan? Decide which actions you'll take, and when. Determine who is in charge at each stage and what type of reporting process they must follow. Keep the plan simple, use clear and plain language.

Manage the risks – Look for opportunities to reduce risk, wherever possible. This may help you reduce, or even eliminate, the need for full contingency plans in certain areas.

Identify operational inefficiencies – Provide a standard to document your planning process, and find opportunities for performance improvement.

It is always wise to research the route that is to be taken and if necessary a "dry run" undertaken, especially if the venue is unknown to the Conductor / Funeral Director – leave nothing to chance. It would go without saying that a hearse driving around attempting to find an address does not give a very good image. With overhead imagery available such as Google Earth, the route or location can be easily described to the other drivers in the funeral cortege.

There are elements of the funeral that need to be in place before the cortege reaches the venue. Seats may need to be reserved for the members of family, ensuring that even with a packed venue, the most important people have seats. Hymn sheets / orders of service need be distributed to those attending, not forgetting the Officiant, the organist and family. Any music requested to be played at the venue needs to be there in advance, test played if possible if the funeral director is providing the player, with the Officiant informed of the music to be played.

If it is custom for the names of those attending to be recorded, then those recording the names or handing out cards need to be in place before anyone arrives and boxes placed near the exit for the cards to be collected in afterwards. Some venues, including churches and chapels will allow donation boxes for the chosen charity to be placed either inside or outside of the premises, however this should always be checked upon with for example the church wardens or clergy prior to the funeral.

Ensure all arrangements agreed with the client are followed through and put into action. Cross check all actions with another colleague in readiness for the day.

Keep in touch with the client from the first conversation and throughout proceedings. They need to know what has been arranged, when and how.

Activity 3

Prepare a contingency plan, considering everything that could go wrong on the day of the funeral. Consider all internal and external factors such as staff, vehicles, mourners, the church, crematorium or burial ground. Write a plan of action for each factor that you have identified.

Upload to your portfolio

UNIT 10 - LO2.0 Understand the need for cross-check identification of the deceased

Activity 4
Take this opportunity to check the business procedures for identification of the deceased within your current workplace. Approach the task as an internal audit and record your findings. **Upload to your portfolio**

Once the Funeral Director / Conductor is conversant with the details of the funeral, the following checks should be made:

- Check the name of the deceased on the wristband and check the name on the nameplate on the coffin/casket. Two members of staff should then sign the mortuary register to confirm that they have put the correct body in the correct coffin/casket
- When the coffin/casket is ready, and the deceased is also ready, the deceased should be placed in it. This should always be done by at least two members of staff for manual handling purposes, paying particular attention to any health and safety and/or manual handling guidelines in force at the funeral company.

The new NAFD Code of Practice requirement states:

- Where possible, your client is always kept informed of the precise location of the deceased person they have entrusted into your care
- You keep an accurate and comprehensive written or electronic record of all deceased persons who are brought into your care. This record must be sufficiently detailed to record all actions and activities carried out in relation to each deceased person. This record must be retained for a minimum of 10 years
- You have suitable systems in place to ensure all deceased people in your care can be easily identified by an external inspector without any assistance from staff.

The deceased should then lie, as designated, awaiting the funeral. Where premises have the facility to put the name of deceased on the door of the chapel of rest, it should be the responsibility of both the person(s) placing the body in the chapel, and the person(s) showing relatives in to pay their last respects to ensure that the name on the door is the same as the name on the coffin/casket. Before showing visitors in to pay their last respects, a member of staff should check the wristband again. It should also be the responsibility of whoever shows a family into the chapel of rest to ensure that all instructions have been complied with in respect of clothing, personal effects, jewellery, etc. This information should be on the funeral arrangement form.

Two members of staff should always be present as the lid is placed on the coffin/casket. They should check that the name on the wristband is the same as the name on the lid, which should then be checked to the name of the funeral for which they are preparing.

Clearly, it is not only essential to ensure all deceased are identifiable through internal tracking processes, but likewise, their personal effects as stated in the Code under O(3.6) which states, you have systems in place to ensure that any personal effects of deceased persons in your care are accurately recorded and securely stored.

Therefore, the body should be checked for any jewellery. Any instructions for jewellery should be strictly adhered to. In case of doubt, the arranging office (if different from where the funeral is leaving) and/or family should be contacted for clarification. It should be the responsibility of the funeral arranger to get a family's instructions in respect of jewellery. If there is no jewellery, then the words "No jewellery" should be written on the arrangement form. These two members of staff should then sign the mortuary register, verifying the identity of the deceased they have sealed in the coffin/casket and also that instructions concerning jewellery have been observed.

It should be the responsibility of the conductor of the funeral and the hearse driver jointly to ensure that the correct coffin/casket is taken on the correct funeral. This must be done by carrying out a physical check of the nameplate on the coffin to ensure that it is the correct one.

If a small nameplate is attached to the head end of the coffin, identification can also be confirmed by checking it with the nameplate placed on the coffin lid.

UNIT 10 - LO3.0 Know how to arrange the floral tributes and dressing of the coffin

Once the above checks have been carried out, the coffin should be dressed with the main floral tribute/s and these firmly secured in place either by using floral wire or non-slip matting for example. Before placing the coffin in the hearse, there should be sufficient staff/manual handling equipment available to safeguard the movement of the coffin into the hearse. Careful consideration should be given to make sure no damage to the coffin or floral tribute/s occur during this process.

Unless otherwise arranged, the coffin will be placed feet first into the hearse and care taken to guarantee it is being held safely until the whole of the coffin has entered the hearse, at which point it should be secured by whichever method is available to do so, in the hearse.

Once the coffin has been placed in the hearse, any remaining flowers arranged tastefully around the coffin inside the hearse and depending on the quantity and weather conditions, any extras placed on the roof and secured to the flower rails. If there are a large number of flowers expected, a flower car may have been arranged and this also should be loaded carefully.

Flowers should not be placed in the boots of vehicles, as they can be damaged or forgotten, however, this may be unavoidable due to flowers being at the house or church in larger numbers than anticipated. In such cases the conductor must make a note of the fact and ensure that the flowers are removed, and displayed, at the same time as the rest of the flowers.

UNIT 10 - LO4.0 Understand the final checks prior to the funeral taking place

Last Minute Checks

Once the conductor is conversant with the details of the funeral, the following checks should be made as part of planning and preparation:

- Ensure no last-minute changes have been made to the arrangements – check all arrangement documentation and additional notes
- Are there any special instructions with regard to the route, 'No Parking' signs etc.?
- Jewellery – any to be removed and/or returned to the family
- Has the client asked for the coffin to be shouldered?

  NB. this, as an option, is often down to company policy and procedures
- Flowers – check main tributes have arrived and are not damaged
- Identity check – correct deceased person, coffin and coffin plate
- Check coffin is undamaged and polished.
- Do colleagues understand their responsibilities with regard to destination, route, special instructions, and place of return?
- Is the team and any vehicles being used, smart and clean?
- As previously stated, in addition to checking the work programme, it is also necessary to run through the following before leaving the office with all funeral team members:
- Verify if the officiant has asked to be collected en-route
- Is an urn or casket to be taken to the crematorium?
- Do you have everything with you that you need for the funeral service?
  - Service sheets
  - Photographs
  - Online downloads / CDs
  - Attendance cards and pens
- Has special music been ordered for the crematorium (e.g. Wesley system)?
- Are trestles, wheel bier, webs, a pall, grave struts or putlocks required?
- Flowers that have arrived at the funeral home are checked to ensure they are not damaged
- Final Identity check – correct deceased, coffin and coffin plate
- Flowers that have arrived at the funeral home should be checked and listed
- If donations have been requested, has a collection plate(s) and suitable notice(s) been placed in the Church or at the place of committal?
- Tissues are available in the limousines
- Umbrellas – sufficient for the main mourners.

UNIT 10 - Self Reflection

Self Reflection

Do you know what to include in a contingency plan to ensure the day of the funeral runs smoothly?

Can you list in order of priority the cross checks to make to ensure the correct deceased is identified at each stage of the funeral process?

Do you know how to dress the coffin and funeral vehicle?

Make a note of the cross checks you make for final preparation

If you are in doubt regarding any of the above, speak to your tutor for additional guidance and advice.

Summary of Activities - Upload all to your portfolio	
Activity 1	Before starting this Unit, take time to think about the process of arranging for the day of the funeral. Describe some of the last minute checks which need to be performed prior to the funeral taking place.
Activity 2	Make a list of all the things that could potentially go wrong in the preparation of the funeral. Note what preventative action you could take for each potential problem / disaster!
Activity 3	Prepare a contingency plan, considering everything that could go wrong on the day of the funeral. Consider all internal and external factors such as staff, vehicles, mourners, the church, crematorium or burial ground. Write a plan of action for each factor that you have identified.
Activity 4	Take this opportunity to check the business procedures for identification of the deceased within your current workplace. Approach the task as an internal audit and record your findings.