



Cemetery Disinterment Application

Page 1 of 2

Updated **JULY 2026**

OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received: _____

Documentation Reviewed: ☐ Complete ☐ Incomplete

Disinterment Scheduled: _____

Action: ☐ Approved ☐ Denied

Comments: _____

Administrator Signature: _____

NOTICE TO APPLICANT

Applications will not be processed until the following items are submitted. All documentation must be complete and accurate at the time of submission. The applicant is responsible for any errors, omissions, or delays resulting from incomplete or incorrect information.

- ☐ Completed disinterment permit issued by the Georgia Department of Public Health or local registrar
- ☐ Written authorization from legally authorized next of kin or agent
- ☐ Court order (if applicable)
- ☐ Documentation verifying legal authority (if not next of kin)
- ☐ Written confirmation from licensed funeral director handling remains
- ☐ Receiving cemetery or facility confirmation
- ☐ Transit permit (if applicable)
- ☐ Filing fee (checks payable to: City of Pooler)

Contact Information

Applicant Name _____ Applicant Email _____

Applicant Mailing Address _____ Applicant Phone _____

Decedent's Next of Kin (if different) _____ Next of Kin Email _____

Next of Kin Mailing Address _____ Next of Kin Phone _____

Funeral Director Name _____ Funeral Director Email _____

Funeral Director Mailing Address _____ Funeral Director Phone _____

Cemetery Information

Cemetery/Facility Name & Address _____ Section/Lot/Grave Number _____



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Decedent Name	Date of Death	Date of Burial (if known)
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Disinterment Information

Receiving Cemetery/Facility Name & Address	Requested Date
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Destination of Remains: ☐ Reinterment (same cemetery) ☐ Transfer (other cemetery) ☐ Cremation

☐ Other: _____

Applicant Affidavit

I, the undersigned, certify under oath that I have read, reviewed, and completed this application, and that all information provided herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I further certify that I am legally authorized to request this disinterment and that I am responsible for obtaining and submitting all required documentation. I acknowledge that cemetery records may not be exact and accept full responsibility for verifying the burial location.

I further acknowledge that I have received a copy of the applicable Standard Operating Procedure ("SOP"), have read and understand its contents, and acknowledge that its terms, including but not limited to the indemnification, release, and liability provisions, are expressly incorporated into and made a part of this sworn affidavit and oath. By executing this affidavit, I affirm that I understand and agree to be bound by those provisions as a condition of this request.

I further release and hold harmless the City from any liability, claim, loss, or damage arising out of or resulting from inaccurate or incomplete information provided in connection with this request, or from actions taken in reliance upon the information and acknowledgments contained herein.

Applicant Print	Applicant Signature	Date
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Notary Print	Notary Signature	Date
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Notary Seal:



CITY of POOLER
— GEORGIA —

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

Gravesite Excavation and Disinterment

I. OVERVIEW

This Standard Operating Procedure, hereinafter referred to as "SOP," establishes the processes and protocols for conducting gravesite excavation and disinterment within Newton Cemetery and any future cemeteries owned or maintained by the City of Pooler, hereinafter referred to as the "City."

This SOP provides guidance for City employees and authorized personnel by outlining preparation requirements, excavation procedures, safety standards, procedures for addressing unexpected discoveries, and restoration of the gravesite following disinterment.

The procedures contained in this document are intended to ensure that all excavation and disinterment activities are conducted in a respectful, safe, and professional manner while protecting the integrity of cemetery property.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure is to establish consistent procedures for gravesite excavation and disinterment conducted by the City of Pooler and to ensure such activities are performed safely, professionally, and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

III. SCOPE

This SOP applies to all activities related to gravesite excavation and disinterment within Newton Cemetery and any future cemeteries owned or maintained by the City of Pooler. This SOP applies to all City employees, contractors, and authorized personnel participating in disinterment activities.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY

The City's Cemetery Administrator shall have overall responsibility for oversight of all disinterment operations and for ensuring adherence to applicable policies, procedures, and laws.

The Cemetery Administrator shall review submitted disinterment requests for administrative completeness, coordinate operations as necessary, supervise excavation procedures when required, and ensure proper documentation and recordkeeping of all disinterment activities.

The Cemetery Administrator shall make final determinations regarding excavation activities if artifacts, unusual materials, or unexpected remains are discovered during the excavation process. The Cemetery Administrator may suspend, postpone, or terminate excavation or disinterment activities due to safety concerns, legal concerns, weather conditions, unexpected discoveries, or other unforeseen circumstances.

The applicant requesting disinterment shall be responsible for compliance with all documentation, authorization, permitting, coordination, and verification requirements established by this SOP and applicable law.

V. LEGAL AUTHORIZATION AND PREPARATION

Prior to any disinterment activity, the applicant shall obtain and submit all required legal documentation and approvals in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including those of the Georgia Department of Public Health.

Required documentation may include written authorization from the legally authorized next of kin or representative, a valid disinterment permit issued by the appropriate regulatory authority, and a court order when applicable.

The applicant bears sole responsibility for obtaining, providing, and verifying all information, authorizations, permits, consents, records, and supporting documentation required for the requested disinterment. Any review, acceptance, processing, or approval of submitted materials by the City of Pooler or the Cemetery Administrator shall not constitute verification of the accuracy, completeness, legality, or sufficiency of such materials and shall not relieve the applicant of responsibility for errors, omissions, conflicting claims, or unauthorized requests. The City may rely upon documents and representations submitted by the applicant without independent investigation.

The applicant shall be solely responsible for coordinating with the licensed funeral director responsible for handling the remains and overseeing removal of the burial container.

The applicant shall provide sufficient information to identify the correct lot and grave location using cemetery records, burial registers, lot maps, and physical markers. Due to the age and condition of certain cemetery records and physical markers, absolute accuracy cannot be guaranteed. The applicant accepts full responsibility for independently verifying the burial location prior to excavation, and the City shall not be liable for inaccuracies arising from historical records, missing markers, or applicant-provided information.

Disinterment operations may be postponed or suspended due to unsafe weather conditions, including heavy rain, flooding, lightning, or other environmental conditions that may compromise worker safety or the stability of the gravesite.

VI. SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

All excavation activities shall comply with applicable safety standards, including Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines related to excavation safety, trench stability, and heavy equipment operation.

City employees or authorized personnel involved in excavation operations shall utilize appropriate personal protective equipment as necessary for the work being performed. Access to the disinterment site shall be restricted to authorized personnel only. Reasonable measures shall be taken to maintain privacy and dignity throughout the disinterment process.

VII. GUIDELINES

A. Excavation Procedure

1. Conduct a thorough site inspection before commencing any work. Report any pre-existing damage to a supervisor and take precautions to avoid damage to monuments, markers, slabs, coping, or other structures.
2. Avoid driving vehicles over monuments, slabs, coping, or other structures and minimize driving over graves whenever possible.
3. Respect adjacent burial lots and their structures at all times.
4. Tools and equipment shall not be placed against or on any markers, monuments, or cemetery structures.
5. Install flags at the four corners of the grave to ensure proper dimensions and alignment. The dimensions will vary depending on whether the burial involves a vault, casket, or cremation container.
6. Place excavated soil on the side of the grave opposite the direction from which the funeral director or professionals will remove the casket. A tarp shall be placed beneath the soil mound and the soil shall be placed no closer than two feet from any structures.
7. If mechanical excavation is appropriate, vehicles such as dump trucks and backhoes shall be positioned in a manner that minimizes disturbance to surrounding gravesites and structures.
8. Remove grass carefully and preserve it for restoration following completion of the excavation.
9. Position two 2" x 10" x 4' end boards perpendicular to the grave opening. A minimum of one 4' x 8' sheet of plywood shall be used to cover a standard-sized grave opening when the excavation is unattended.
10. The grave opening shall be secured at all times to prevent accidental entry or cave-ins, particularly in loose or disturbed soil conditions.
11. Maintain a clean and orderly worksite throughout the excavation process and report any issues immediately to the Cemetery Administrator.

B. Discovery of Artifacts or Unexpected Materials

1. Safety shall always be the first priority when opening a grave.
2. Excavation shall immediately cease upon discovery of any items resembling funerary objects, artifacts, human remains outside the intended burial container, or any unusual materials.
3. The discovery shall be reported immediately to the Cemetery Administrator.
4. Work shall not resume until the Cemetery Administrator has evaluated the situation and provides further instruction.
5. If excavation is authorized to continue, the Cemetery Administrator shall remain on site to monitor operations. Excavation shall proceed with extreme caution and the Cemetery Administrator shall monitor both the grave and soil pile to prevent further disturbance of any artifacts. Upon completion, soil piles

and the surrounding area shall be inspected for additional artifacts or materials.

6. If human remains or burial features are discovered outside the intended grave location, excavation shall cease immediately and the Cemetery Administrator shall determine whether additional authorities must be notified.
7. All discoveries and procedures shall be documented as part of the official record of the disinterment.

C. Covering the Grave

1. Machinery shall be used to cover all graves unless otherwise directed by the Cemetery Administrator.
2. The grave shall be filled with sufficient soil to prevent depressions, voids, or settling.
3. Soil shall be compacted appropriately to promote long-term stability of the gravesite.

D. Restoration Of the Gravesite

1. All equipment including boards, tarps, markers, and related materials shall be removed from the site within twenty-four hours following completion of the disinterment.
2. The grave surface should remain slightly mounded or sunken to allow for natural settling of the soil.
3. Excess soil from the excavation site shall be removed within twenty-four hours. Any remaining soil mounds shall be removed within one week if applicable.
4. Grass that was removed shall be replaced and properly tamped to encourage regrowth.
5. If the original grass cannot be reused, grass seed shall be applied to the area as needed and watered accordingly.

VIII. DOCUMENTATION & RECORDKEEPING

The Cemetery Administrator shall maintain permanent records of all disinterment activities. These records shall include disinterment permits and authorizations, the name of the decedent, the grave location, the date and time of disinterment, personnel involved, the funeral home receiving custody of the remains, final disposition information, and documentation of any discoveries or unusual conditions encountered.

All records shall be maintained as part of the official cemetery records of the City of Pooler.

IX. HOLD HARMLESS & INDEMNIFICATION

The applicant requesting disinterment agrees to release, indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the City of Pooler, its elected officials, officers, employees, agents, contractors, and representatives from and against any and all claims, demands,

damages, liabilities, losses, costs, or expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, arising out of or related to the disinterment process, excavation activities, identification of burial locations, condition of remains or burial containers, inaccuracies in historical cemetery records, applicant-provided information, or the actions of third parties involved in the disinterment.

The applicant further acknowledges that cemetery records, grave markers, and burial locations may contain inaccuracies due to the age of records, prior burials, environmental conditions, or other factors beyond the City's control, and the applicant accepts full responsibility for verifying all burial information prior to excavation.

The City of Pooler makes no warranties or guarantees regarding the condition, location, or recoverability of remains, caskets, vaults, markers, or related burial materials. The applicant assumes all risks associated with the disinterment process and agrees that the City shall not be liable for unavoidable damage, deterioration, or conditions discovered during excavation or removal activities.

X. PROCEDURE REVIEW

This Standard Operating Procedure may be reviewed and updated periodically by the City of Pooler to ensure continued compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and operational needs.