BOKHOVEN MONUMENT

Preparing Headstones Prior to Winter Weather

As winter approaches, taking proper care of a headstone monument is essential to ensure that they remain in good condition throughout the cold and snowy months. The combination of freezing temperatures, moisture, and harsh weather can lead to damage if preventative steps are not taken. Whether your loved one's headstone is made of granite, marble, or another material, this guide will provide you with the necessary steps to maintain and protect it before winter sets in.

Winter Maintenance is Important

Winter weather can be particularly harsh on outdoor memorials. Ice, snow, and freezing rain can seep into cracks, causing them to widen as water freezes and expands. Additionally, the freeze-thaw cycle can lead to erosion, stains, and other wear and tear. Regular maintenance before winter can prevent these issues and preserve the integrity of the headstone for years to come.

What You Can Do to Prepare A Headstone for Winter

Taking a few key steps before the cold weather arrives can make a significant difference in how well a headstone withstands winter's challenges.

1. **Clean the Headstone Properly**

- **Freezing Temperatures**: If temps are projected to be below freezing, avoid spraying or soaking the stone. Water can get in the pores of the stone and when it freezes, it can damage features of the stone like letters, pictures and other carvings.
- **Use a soft brush or cloth**: Before winter, gently clean the headstone using a soft brush or non-abrasive cloth. Avoid using harsh chemicals or abrasive cleaning tools, as these can damage the surface.

- **Mild detergent and water**: If there is dirt or moss build-up, use a mixture of mild non-scented, non-colored detergent and water. Apply with a cloth and rinse thoroughly to remove any residue.
- **Avoid power washing**: Never use High-pressure cleaning methods. High Pressure water can harm the stone, damage the center of letters, especially softer materials like marble. Stick to gentle cleaning techniques to preserve the stone's appearance and structural integrity.

2. **Inspect for Damage**

- **Check for cracks or chips**: Carefully inspect the headstone for any cracks, chips, or other signs of wear. Even small imperfections can worsen during the freeze-thaw cycle in winter. If you notice any damage, consider having it repaired before the cold weather sets in.
- **Inspect the foundation**: Ensure that the base or foundation of the headstone is stable. Ground shifting or erosion over time can make the stone unsteady, and winter conditions may exacerbate these issues.

3. **Trim Surrounding Vegetation**

- **Remove overgrown plants**: Overgrown grass, bushes, or other vegetation around the headstone can hold moisture, leading to mold or mildew growth on the stone. Make sure to trim any plants around the memorial to allow for proper airflow and reduce moisture accumulation.
- **Clear debris**: Leaves, twigs, and other debris should be removed from the area surrounding the headstone. These materials can trap moisture and freeze, potentially causing staining or damage to the stone.

4. **Preventing Water Accumulation**

- **Ensure proper drainage**: If the area around the headstone is prone to collecting water, you may want to create proper drainage channels. Standing water can freeze, leading to cracks in the stone or its foundation.
- **Examine The Bonding Compound**: the bonding compound between the tablet and the base of your headstone acts as a bonding agent and a watertight seal. If the compound has aged and is missing, water can get between the tablet and the base

and cause damage to the headstone. This can be repaired by a monument professional.

Additional Tips for Winter Headstone Care

- **Visit periodically**: If possible, visit the cemetery during winter to check on the headstone's condition. Removing snow or ice build-up with a soft brush can help prevent long-term damage.
- **Consult a professional**: If you're unsure about how to properly care for a specific type of headstone material, consult Bokhoven Monument for advice. Some stones require specific maintenance techniques that can extend their lifespan.