

Accident Victim Assistance

Educational Content

Guide to Follow after a Fatal Accident

1. First 24–48 hours: Safety, Confirmation, and Immediate Needs

- Confirm the death and where your loved one has been taken (hospital, medical examiner, or funeral home).
- Notify close family members and decide who will be the main point of contact for officials, hospitals, and the funeral home.
- Ask which law-enforcement agency is investigating and write down the report number, officer's name, and contact information; this is critical later.
- Secure your loved one's home, vehicle, and personal belongings (lock doors, safeguard keys, wallet, phone, important documents).
- Arrange care for children, elderly relatives, and pets who depended on the person who died.

2. Funeral and Burial or Cremation Arrangements

- Choose a funeral home and meet with a funeral director to discuss burial or cremation, services, and costs; ask for a written, itemized price list.
- Request several certified copies of the death certificate through the funeral home or county vital records office; you will need multiple copies for insurance, banks, and any legal case.
- Ask the funeral home if they can delay full payment, set up a payment plan, or wait for life-insurance or legal funds, since costs can be significant.
- Keep every contract, invoice, and receipt related to funeral, burial, and travel; these expenses can be reimbursable in insurance or wrongful-death claims.

3. Finding Financial and Nonprofit Assistance

- Contact local charities, churches, or community organizations to ask if they have emergency funeral funds or can negotiate reduced-cost services with a funeral home.
- Ask the funeral director if they know of funeral-assistance programs or nonprofit grants in your state; many directors already work with such programs.
- Look into national or state programs that help with funeral expenses, such as FEMA funeral assistance after certain declared disasters or state victim-compensation programs that reimburse crime-related funeral costs.
- Apply promptly for state crime-victim compensation if the death may be related to a crime such as drunk driving, vehicular manslaughter, or hit-and-run; these programs may cover funeral and burial costs, counseling, and lost support.

Disclaimer: This material is for general educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional advice.