Funeral Home Worker Safety Stats and Facts

FACTS

The funeral industry has many hazards that can create a risk to health and safety. Common hazards include hazardous manual tasks, infectious diseases and hazardous chemicals.

1. Injuries from manual tasks in the funeral industry result from ongoing wear and tear to joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles, and discs. Lifting bodies that are in an awkward position can strain muscles.
2. Placing bodies in cold storage on lower and higher shelves can present ergonomic issues and potential for overexertion due to the limited space and awkward postures needed to move the bodies.
3. The embalming procedure requires work with large amounts of blood, which is potentially infectious. Blood can enter the body through contact with broken skin; by inhalation of aerosols; and by splashing into the eyes, nose, or mouth. Embalming procedures create risk of exposure to the causative viruses for AIDS (HIV), hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C, and other bloodborne pathogens.
4. The chemicals used in the embalming process may include formaldehyde, phenol, glycerol, alcohols, glutaraldehyde, and coloring agents that can cause respiratory irritation and sensitization. Formaldehyde is a sensitizing agent that can cause an immune system response upon initial exposure. The health effects of formaldehyde exposure are respiratory irritation, eye irritation, skin irritation, dermatitis, respiratory sensitization (possibly leading to occupational asthma), and cancer.

STATS

- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 60% of funeral service workers are self-employed and work in private funeral homes.
- Embalmers had variable vaccine uptake and variable knowledge, attitude and beliefs towards embalming those with blood-borne viruses. 15 % of respondents reported a work-related injury, back injury being the most common.
- A total of 1,142 funeral home workers were fatally injured at work.
- An average of 13.3 % employed funeral home workers died each year as a result of injuries on the job.
- Funeral home managers held about 12,500 jobs in 2020. The largest employers of funeral home managers were as follows:
    - Death care services 80%
    - Self-employed workers 19
- Morticians, undertakers, and funeral arrangers held about 25,000 jobs in 2020. The largest employers of morticians, undertakers, and funeral arrangers were as follows:
    - Death care services 98%
    - Self-employed workers 1