

<https://www.kgw.com/article/news/local/funeral-homes-and-cemeteries-hving-to-adjust-to-new-restrictions/283-2512c97b-8c3f-4361-aa4b-5ad4689ab70c>

Funeral homes, cemeteries adjust to new restrictions during coronavirus pandemic

Services are being offered via Facebook Live and a limited number of family are able to attend in person.



Author: Devon Haskins

Published: 5:03 PM PDT March 24, 2020

Updated: 6:39 PM PDT March 24, 2020

PORTLAND, Ore. — William Carr's mom Joyce Swarn passed away on March 12 from natural causes.

"My mom was everything, she was a rock, she was strong, she was independent, she was a go-getter," Carr said.

[Video: Oregon Funeral Restrictions](#)

In planning her funeral, he wants to honor his mom in the finest way possible, but with restrictions around gathering sizes and the spread of the coronavirus, Carr is finding that it's more difficult to celebrate the life of a woman so close to his heart.

Swarn was the second oldest of 17 children, a mother of three and a grandmother to many more. She'll be buried on Thursday at Sunset Memorial Cemetery in southwest Portland.

Carr says he's been in constant contact with the cemetery's director about how he can best honor his mom. At first, he was told they wouldn't allow a graveside viewing and then says things changed and now a limited amount of family will be able to pay their respects. Cars can drive up near the plot, a small group will be able to pay their respects and then get back in the car and allow the next car with family and friends to do the sCredit: William Carr

Joyce Swarn

"It's so restrictive that we hope to plan for something better and bigger for my mom for her friends to be able to attend when this restriction gets lifted."

At Willamette National Cemetery, Louise Larkin's family is running into some of the same issues. The mother of six will be buried at the National Cemetery sometime this week. The family is working to finalize a date and find out how restricted it will be.

"What I'm looking at is for some family to be there to follow the car up to where she's going to be buried, we can stay by the road, that's not a problem," Sandra Heath, Larkin's daughter said.

The cemetery's director cited safety issues with heavy machinery nearby as why they needed to keep family away from the grave site.

"We're still allowing our families to do the interment and then come back at a later date and do their service," Pete Sardo, Director of the Willamette and Vancouver Barracks National Cemeteries, said.

Veterans Affairs National Cemeteries announced on March 23 that all "committal services and the rendering of military funeral honors will not be conducted until further notice at VA national cemeteries. Immediate family members (limited to no more than 10 individuals) of the deceased may witness the interment if requested," A media release said.

The cemeteries will remain open for visitors, but ask that everyone visiting maintain the proper 6-foot space from others.

Others are trying to come up with different ways to honor a families wish, but also keep gatherings to less than 10 family members. At Finley-Sunset Hills Mortuary and Memorial Park in Southwest Portland, they are still offering services, but socially distanced, in a way.

"What that means is we're having very limited services, we are offering streaming via Facebook Live or other means," said Shannan Speicher, General Manager at Finley-Sunset Hills Mortuary and Memorial Park.

Speicher says they are working with the state government to better clarify if funerals are considered essential and hoped to have better clarification by the end of the week.

"This shouldn't be touched, people are grieving over lost ones that have to have some closure and be able to move on with a burial service. Those should not be included in this lockdown," said Carr.

[Video: Oregon Governor Brown's orders](#)