

2018 Funeral Home Price Survey – Vermont

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You'd never walk into the nearest car dealership and buy whatever model and options the salesperson recommended, but that's exactly how most people buy funerals. Most pick a funeral home that's nearby—even if they're not going to use it for a viewing or service—or one they have used in the past—even if they were unhappy. While people shop around for cars, appliances and clothes, and happily share shopping tips, few people visit more than one funeral home and rarely share price information, even with close friends. To make matters worse, most people are making this first time purchase under time pressure and in the throes of grief; circumstances that can make anyone vulnerable and unable to make clearheaded decisions. And, unlike other products and services, funeral prices are not easily accessible so most people are shocked to learn how enormously prices can vary between funeral homes, even those just blocks apart.

When it comes to a funeral, you only have one chance for it to turn out the way you want, so the quality of service provided by the funeral home is very important. But, you don't necessarily get what you pay for. One striking example of this is the vast range of prices for direct cremation. The family is rarely present for any part of this process and prices for this in Vermont range from a low of \$1,065 to over \$3,000.

NOTE!—Some funeral homes include, within their price for direct cremation, the third-party charge that the crematory levies to perform the actual cremation. But some do not. We believe it's misleading to state a price for direct cremation that doesn't include the actual cost of cremation. You, the consumer, should ask specifically whether the funeral home's charge for direct cremation includes the crematory fee. On average, such fees run about \$300, though we have seen them range from \$275 to \$450. We have indicated on the survey whether the funeral home's direct cremation price is included, if it is not included, and when it's not possible to tell from the funeral home's price list.

Price Range for Selected Options

	Low	High
Direct Cremation	\$1,065	\$3,285
Immediate Burial	\$995	\$3,550
Full-service Funeral	\$3,826	\$6,760

The amount you spend on a funeral is in no way related to the love you feel for the deceased. Most funeral directors are compassionate, caring people, but they are also salespeople. Do not work with one who appeals to feelings of guilt, family pride, or social pressure to persuade you to spend more.

All prices obtained from funeral homes in late 2017 and early 2018. A good faith effort was made to report information accurately. However, the purpose of this survey is to educate, not to replace personal shopping. To determine actual current prices, contact the individual funeral home.

Federal law requires funeral directors to give you prices over the phone and hand you a printed, itemized price list when you show up in person.

Glossary of Terms

Basic Services – The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) allows funeral homes (FH) to charge a nondeclineable fee for professional services. Unless you purchase a pre-bundled package, you will have to pay this fee in addition to whatever else you buy. We think of it as a cover charge, but without the band.

Direct Cremation – One of the four pre-bundled packages required by the FTC. Includes the basic services of the Funeral Director (FD) and staff, local transfer of the body to the FH, obtaining necessary permits, and transportation to the crematory. Our grid includes an “alternative container” (the least expensive option).

Immediate Burial – One of the four pre-bundled packages required by the FTC. Includes the basic services of the FD and staff, local transfer of the body to the FH, obtaining necessary permits, and local transportation to the cemetery. Not included: The cost of a casket or vault/grave liner or cemetery charges for gravesite or opening and closing, and the monument maker charges for a headstone.

Alternative Container – The least expensive container offered, usually fiberboard, composite, or plywood. You can buy one from the FH or online. If you use the one made from sturdy cardboard it can be beautifully personalized (google “decorated cardboard casket”) by grandchildren, friends and family.

Casket – Make one from a kit, buy one online, or choose an inexpensive one and cover it with a flag, quilt, or religious shroud. Caskets have a high mark up and you can save hundreds or thousands of dollars buying online (google “discount casket”). The FH cannot charge you a handling fee if you buy elsewhere.

Embalming and Viewing – Embalming is a multifaceted, invasive procedure that is not required by Vermont law. Refrigeration is a legal alternative after 48 hours. Some bodies look better embalmed, but many look just fine as they are. Some funeral homes may be willing to have a viewing without embalming if the circumstances permit.

Funeral, Graveside, Memorial Service – You can have a funeral (body present) at a funeral home, a religious institution, or graveside. A memorial service (no body) can be held anywhere and you do not need a FD. Will you actually use the FH? If you are having a church ceremony, graveside service, funeral and/or memorial service at a religious institution or club, **you do not need to use a local funeral home.** You only need a local FH if you are planning to have a viewing or service at the FH.

2018 cost-comparison survey of Vermont funeral homes

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CITY	Brattlebory	Bristol	Burlington	Burlington	Burlington	Burlington
	Atamaniuk Funeral Home - Brattleboro, VT	Brown-McClay Funeral Homes - Bristol, VT	Cremation Society of Chittenden County - Burlington, VT	Ready Funeral & Cremation Service - Burlington, VT	Boucher & Pritchard Funeral Home - Burlington, VT	Elmwood Meunier Funeral Home - Burlington, VT
Direct cremation with alternative container	\$ 2,060.00	\$ 2,364.00	\$ 1,585.00	\$ 2,795.00	\$ 1,965.00	\$ 2,130.00
Is the crematory fee (average \$300) included in the direct cremation price?	no	yes	yes	no (but they own their own crematory, so why?)	yes	no
Immediate burial without casket	\$ 2,215.00	\$ 3,520.00	not offered	\$ 2,625.00	\$ 2,495.00	\$ 2,330.00
Full-service funeral						
Basic services of funeral director and staff	\$ 1,975.00	\$ 1,462.00	\$ 1,075.00	\$ 2,625.00	\$ 1,995.00	\$ 2,290.00
Transport of body	\$ 425.00	\$ 392.00	Included	\$ 325.00	\$ 395.00	\$ 345.00
Embalming	\$ 525.00	\$ 420.00	not offered	\$ 610.00	\$ 495.00	\$ 580.00
Other preparation of body	\$ 95.00	\$ 131.00	not offered	\$ 175.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 255.00
Viewing or visitation	\$ 525.00	\$ 337.00	\$ 125.00	\$ 975.00	\$ 350.00	\$ 380.00
Funeral ceremony	\$ 575.00	\$ 644.00	not offered	\$ 725.00	\$ 350.00	\$ 340.00
Graveside service	\$ 450.00	\$ 428.00	not offered	\$ 225.00	\$ 350.00	\$ 275.00
Hearse	\$ 325.00	\$ 311.00	not offered	\$ 310.00	\$ 350.00	\$ 375.00
Limo/Family Car (Note: Most use rentals and will be quoted if choosing this option)			not offered			\$ 325.00
TOTAL	\$ 4,895.00	\$ 4,305.00	N/A	\$ 5,970.00	\$ 4,435.00	\$ 5,165.00

