



Royal Oak Burial Park Crematorium Report

Background

Representatives from the Falaise Community Association met with Royal Oak Burial Park (ROBP) management on Friday July 16, 2021. The chair of the Board of Cemetery Trustees of Greater Victoria also attended. The purpose of the meeting was to gain more insight into the operation of the crematorium and to discuss some of the concerns expressed by Falaise residents. Conversations with local residents earlier in the year (April 2021) had revealed that the majority of respondents have a limited knowledge of the crematoria operation. Worries they expressed included: are the smoke emissions harmful to human health, should we be concerned about the odour, how often does the crematorium operate, are there provincial regulations concerning air emissions from crematoria. The meeting was initiated to discuss these questions.

This report summarizes our discussion with ROBP and references the BC regulation and pertinent findings from a literature review.

History The ROBP was established in the 1920s to serve the Greater Victoria Region and operates as a non-profit/municipal entity. The organization maintains the grounds of the burial park and provides a cremation service. It is not involved in planning and conducting funerals. The crematorium began operation in 1937. Cremation, as a preferred option, has climbed over the years to approximately 90 percent of all funeral arrangements in BC. There are four crematoria in the Greater Victoria area: two on Falaise Drive (Royal Oak Burial Park and First Memorial) and two in Langford. (Hatley Memorial Gardens and Affordable Cremation and Burial).

Regulation

Management of cemeteries in BC are legislated under the Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Act and associated Cremation, Internment Funeral Services Regulation. Consumer Protection BC, a government agency, is empowered with administering the act. Under this act this agency is required to conduct periodic inspections of interment records including records of cremation. It does not include reviewing technical aspects of cremation operation.

The BC regulation prohibits the use of plastics, fiberglass, foam, Styrofoam, rubber, PVC and zinc in funeral containers to reduce harmful emissions during cremation from our. Our literature research we found that air emissions from cremation potentially contain a combination of particulate matter – dust, sulphur dioxide – which smells, nitrogen oxide – causes smog, volatile organic compounds ((VOCs) – from solvents and heavy metals – mercury. That said, there is no BC provincial regulation specifically applicable to air emissions from crematoria. We understand this is because crematoria are deemed by



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government to be relatively low total emitters compared to other incineration facilities (e.g. municipal waste incinerators and industrial plants). We also understand that the periodic air emissions generated during a cremation are not considered by the provincial government to be a public health hazard. This position is common to governments across North America although Ontario and Québec do have specific regulations.

Operation

The cremation units presently in use were installed in the 1970s and apart from some minor upgrades have remained in continued use. Each unit consists of a two-chamber combustion system. After combustion in the primary chamber at high temperature the residue passes into an after-burner to complete the burning process. Smoke and particulates are exhausted via a chimney into the air. Most of the time the emissions are relatively low. However there is no scrubbing system, which would further remove any remaining particulate matter.

ROBP or the provincial government do not monitor cremation air emissions. We understand modern equipment have more process controls and allow continuous monitoring of pollutants and alerts for the operator.

The crematorium operates Monday through Friday all day. Each cremation takes (about) 2 hours. The ROBP is aware that odour and smoke emissions can be disturbing to nearby residents. Odour noticeable would depend on the direction prevailing wind during the period of the cremation

Future Plans

We learned that the ROBP is in the final stages of preparing to purchase and install new “state-of-the-art cremation equipment. This new equipment brings many positives; including more operational / energy efficiencies. In addition it is anticipated that there will be a noticeable reduction in periodic air emissions.

This review was undertaken by Stuart Macpherson (President 2021) and Sandrine Lio (board member 2019-20) September 20 2021

Reference: Crematoria emissions and air quality impacts - Juliette O’Keefe National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health Mar 24, 2020