

# The Importance of Cemetery Regulations

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## **Introduction**

Cemetery rules and regulations are important and must be followed and respected because without them the cemetery would become unorganized, unsafe, and potentially bankrupt.

Planting shrubs, placing trinkets, and bordering that goes against regulations causes the cemetery to become unorganized. Leaving objects that go against regulations can cause safety hazards.

With all of the overgrown shrubs and trees and safety hazards the cemetery could face potential injury lawsuits as well as expensive equipment repairs which can cause the cemetery to go bankrupt. The reasons for cemetery regulations are vast, these are examples of a few.

## **Unorganized**

Unorganized cemeteries are extremely difficult to maintain because the stones are just far enough apart to allow the mowers to get through. Adding borders and trinkets make it impossible to pass through resulting in patches of uncut grass that has to be trimmed with a hand trimmer.

According to article 3 of the cemetery rules, “Fences, hedges, shrubs, curbs or corner posts, closures, bricks, iron work, etc., above grade shall not be allowed on or around lots. Wooden headboards or markers, wooden trellises, chairs or settees, wholly or in part of wood, and vases and urns, other than granite or bronze, are prohibited. These and any other items cannot be placed to the side or behind the gravestone in order to allow for proper care of the lot.” (Daniel C., 2020, pp. 1). Unorganized cemeteries can also hinder the ability of future burials due to bordering, plants, or trinkets extending into another plot. The result of regulation-breaking objects being placed are as follows from article 8 of the regulations, “For the safety of cemetery workers, stone chips, crushed stone, gravel, shells, etc. are not permitted around stones and will be removed without notice. While caring for the cemetery or digging graves the cemetery and

cemetery authorities will not be held responsible for damage.” (Daniel C., 2020, pp. 1). Another big reason that unorganized cemeteries cause a problem is the inability to find burial sites. Huge overgrown shrubs will often block other stones especially if the stone that’s being blocked is a grass marker.

## **Unsafe**

Not following the rules and regulations in the cemetery can have huge safety impacts. If a mower hits a bordering, a glass bottle, etc. it could cause those objects to break and projectile and injure the operator or someone nearby. The previous quote from article 8 reserves employees the right to remove these hazards so they don’t get hurt. As you read in the previous paragraph, the first sentence of article 3 states, “Fences, hedges, shrubs, curbs or corner posts, closures, bricks, iron work, etc., above grade shall not be allowed on or around lots. ..” (Daniel C., 2020, pp. 1). What this means is anything that sticks out of the ground above grass level isn’t allowed. Not only will mowers hit them, but they also cause a serious tripping hazard. Another serious tripping hazard is divots or holes caused by people digging up the grass around their stones. This goes against article 7 of the regulations which states, “Disturbing the turf or sod on any lot is not permitted. Evergreens or shrubs are not allowed.” (Daniel C., 2020, pp. 1).

## **Bankruptcy**

Cemetery bankruptcy can have many causes. Not following the regulations as mentioned in the second paragraph about disorganization can cause employees to have to go back and spend more time trimming the spots they couldn’t get to with a mower which costs the cemetery more money. If a mower strikes a border made of stone or metal, it could damage the equipment leading to costly repairs such as the purchase of new blades, the cost of installment and any other

repairs that may be needed from the incident. If someone were to be injured in the cemetery due to being hit by something flying out of a mower deck, tripping on borders or holes, or if a child gets ahold of a bottle of liquor left, it could very well result in a lawsuit. If the cemetery were to be sued by someone injured and it was the result of another going against regulations, the cemetery would then file a civil lawsuit against the individual who broke regulations. If that information is not known then there's no way for the cemetery to make up the cost of the lawsuit. The cemetery will also have to pay workers comp if an employee is injured from the cemetery being unsafe. Another reason breaking regulations will cause the cemetery money is the damage of headstones due to root damage or damage related to overgrown shrubs which would have to be repaired. When the cemetery looks unorganized and unsafe, they won't be able to sell plots. If there's an overgrown shrub or tree that was planted, it will obstruct neighboring plots resulting in the inability to inter a casket or urn.

### **Opposing Viewpoints**

Many people with items that go against regulations think that it's ok because other graves have them. One reason for this is because when removing items that go against the regulations, employees often get approached and complained to, and in one instance an employee was yelled at and threatened so the cemetery put a hold on removing these regulation breaking items until they found a way to inform people that they will be taking action if the items aren't removed by the owners within a certain time period. The second reason that other people have regulation breaking items is because they were given special permission from a previous pastor before the regulations were updated. These items only include shrubs and trees which are taken care of by the cemetery employees. In an interview conducted with the director of business operations for the parish he explained "We give it an amount of time for them to mourn. After that we really

have to go into the rules and regulations and explain that to them and that's exactly how we explain it to them we say, 'We respect that you have to mourn but it's been three months and we need to bring this back to the rules and regulations again.'" (D Cunha, personal communication, May 25, 2023).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, cemetery rules and regulations are important and must be followed and respected because without them, the cemetery would become unorganized, unsafe, and potentially bankrupt. Cemeteries are a place to mourn loved ones, they're not a place to garden and decorate. The rules don't say planting of any sort isn't allowed, as the director of business operations stated in the interview, "We only allow six inches from the stone.." (D Cunha, personal communication, May 25, 2023). If people wish to plant flowers etc. they're allowed to as long as it follows the regulations. The cemetery receives complaints about its appearance often which is due to the fact that the employees are busy managing the other properties and don't have time to go through the cemetery all the time and pick up dirt, grass clumps, plant trimmings, etc. which wouldn't be there if people were following the regulations. In order to keep the cemetery clean, organized, and safe people need to act on the regulations that were agreed to upon purchase of their plots.

## References

Cunha, D. (2020). *Cemetery Policy September 2020 Collaborative49343*. St. Joseph, Guardian of the Holy Family Parish.

<https://files.ecatholic.com/22476/documents/2022/4/Cemetery%20Policy%20September%202020%20Collaborative49343.pdf?t=1650485875000>