

Grave Subsidence + Top Ups Fact Sheet



Catholic
Cemeteries +
Crematoria

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What is grave subsidence?

Grave subsidence refers to the appearance of graves 'sinking'. This is an entirely natural process caused by loosened soil settling back into place.

What causes grave subsidence?

The excavation of a grave, or any other reasonable size hole, results in the loosening of the excavated material.

Backfilling (the process of using the excavated dirt to fill a grave) will inevitably create small air pockets in the loosened soil beneath the grounds surface.

Over time, a backfilled grave will 'sink' as the air pockets escape and the soil settles; this is natural process and practically unavoidable, especially in wet weather.

The amount and frequency of grave sinkage depends upon numerous factors, including:

- Soil type
- Grave location
- Depth of excavation
- Amount of rain, or rainwater runoff
- Groundwater levels

Heavy or prolonged rainfall in particular will significantly contribute to ground subsidence.

After the Funeral

Following the funeral, the equipment is removed and the grave is backfilled using the soil excavated from it.

- A certain amount of 'mounding up' of the grave takes place in anticipation of ground sinkage. You will note that the 'mound' is a thick clay material, which is the soil excavated from the grave. During the weeks after the burial the cemetery will continue to monitor and top up the grave, if required with this clay material.
- Until the ground stabilises, the use of top soil or sand like material to 'top up' the grave is futile as the finer particles erode in the wind or simply wash away in rain.
- Once the ground is suitably settled, a layer of topsoil and turf will be placed over the grave area. Turf may need to be laid more than once, depending upon the weather conditions and the grave condition.

It is **important to note** that graves need to be topped up on several occasions over a prolonged period before ground movements naturally ceases. Please note we do not use machinery to compact soil as this could damage caskets or caskets. We will supervise the event to ensure that respect for the deceased person is maintained and that public health is protected.



Recently backfilled grave



Loose soil settling into place (grave subsidence)



Stabilised grave prepared for turf to be laid



Grave with turfing completed

Should you have any concerns about grave subsidence or want your grave attended to please contact the applicable cemetery or memorial park as shown on back page.



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Contact Us

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