

2008 AMBIS survey of Austin area prices of selected funeral goods and services

AUSTIN AREA FUNERAL HOMES 2008 SURVEY*	Direct Cremation	Immediate Burial	Full funeral with 20 ga. metal casket	Full funeral with 18 ga. metal casket	20 ga. metal casket	18 ga. metal casket	Embalm-ing	Refrig-eration (10)	Alternative container	Rental casket	Nonde-clinable fee
A Life Celebration by Franklin 510 S. Main St. Taylor 512-365-6000	\$1395	\$2690	\$5900 (1)	\$7600 (1)	\$1195	\$2895	\$695	\$100	\$250	\$995	\$1495
A Simple Tradition (2) 1611 E. Cesar Chavez Austin 512-477-7495	\$725 (3)	\$1050	\$3050	\$4045	\$500	\$1495	\$455	\$50	\$45	Not offered	\$595
All Faiths Funeral Service (4) 4360 S. Congress Ave, Ste. 115 Austin 512-326-8878	\$895 (5)	\$2330	\$4500	\$5600	\$595	\$1695	\$450	\$95	\$35	Not offered	\$995
Angel Funeral Home (6) 1600 South 1st Street Austin 512-	\$1470	\$3690	\$6790	\$9090	\$1195	\$3495	\$495	\$95	\$150	Not offered	\$2095
Austin-Peel & Son Funeral Home 607 E. Anderson Lane Austin 512-419-7224	\$1289	\$1995	\$5579	\$6379	\$1195	\$1995	\$450	\$75	\$80	Not offered	\$1389
Beck Funeral Home (7) 15709 Ranch Road 620 Austin 512-244-3772	\$2255	\$3780	\$6885	\$7885	\$1395	\$2395	\$995	\$95	\$195	\$995	\$1995
Condra Funeral Home (8) 503 Talbot Taylor 512-352-3636	\$2290	\$2790	\$7705	\$8305	\$595	\$1195	\$1295	\$495	\$95	\$795	\$2695
Cook-Walden/Capitol Parks Funeral Home 14501 North IH-35 (8) (9) Pflugerville 512-251-4118	\$2495	\$3390	\$9004	\$9604	\$595	\$1195	\$1395	\$595	\$95	\$795	\$3430
Cook-Walden Davis Funeral Home (8) 2900 Williams Drive Georgetown 512-863-2564	\$1990	\$2790	\$6359	\$6959	\$595	\$1195	\$1395	\$595	\$95	\$795	\$1275
Eeds Funeral Home 408 South Main Street Lockhart 512-398-2343	\$2585	\$2625	\$5729 (11)	\$6670 (11)	\$649	\$1590	\$650	\$500	\$100	\$895	\$1950
Elgin Funeral Home 712 N. Avenue C Elgin 512-281-5697	\$1289	\$1975	\$5959	\$7229	\$1440	\$2710	\$450	No charge	\$80	\$825	\$1389
Fuller-Sheffield Funeral Services 2808 E. Martin Luther King Blvd. Austin 512-476-9164	\$1520	\$2495	\$5860 (1)	\$6860 (1)	\$1495	\$2495	\$600	Not offered	\$250	Not offered	\$1750
Gabriels Funeral Chapel 393 N. IH 35 Georgetown 512-869-8888	\$1825	\$2290	\$5070 (11)	\$5970 (11)	\$695	\$1595	\$895	\$95	\$185	\$995	\$1690
Harrell Funeral Home (12) 4435 Frontier Trail Austin 512-443-1366	\$2405	\$2130	\$6240	\$7640	\$995	\$2395	\$575	\$175 (13)	\$145	Not offered	\$2240
Jones Family Funeral Home 209 North Avenue C Elgin 512-285-4616	\$999	\$2050	\$4690 (1)	\$6270 (1)	\$995	\$2575	\$425	No charge	No charge	Not offered	\$1195
King-Tears Mortuary 1300 East 12th Street Austin 512-476-9128	\$1495	\$3590	\$6245	\$7945	\$1195	\$2895	\$795	\$100	\$350	Not offered	\$1795
Marrs-Jones-Newby Funeral Home (8) 505 Old Austin Highway Bastrop 512-321-2576	\$2590	\$2990	\$8130	\$8830	\$595	\$1295	\$1295	\$495	\$195	\$795	\$2795
Mission Funeral Home (14) 1615 E Cesar Chavez Street Austin 512-476-4355	\$1410	\$1680	\$6130	\$7775	\$1550	\$3195	\$425	\$85	\$40	Not offered	\$1795
Mission Funeral Home—Serenity Chapel 6204 South 1st Street (2) Austin 512-444-3355	\$2320	\$2990	\$6360	\$7960	\$995	\$2595	\$595	\$85	\$40	Not offered	\$1995
Neptune Society 911 W. Anderson Lane, Suite 111 Austin 512-323-0122	\$2066 (15)	Not offered	Not offered	Not offered	Not offered	Not offered	Not offered	Not offered separately	\$95	Not offered	\$550
Pennington Funeral Home (16) 323 North Comanche Street San Marcos 512-353-4311	\$2770	\$3725	\$6164	\$7719	\$995	\$2550	\$550	\$75	\$125	\$895	\$2335
Phillips, Upshaw & Richard Funeral Home 1410 East 12th Street Austin 512-472-1934	\$1255	\$2020	\$4851 (11)	\$6051 (11)	\$1195	\$2395	\$670	\$65	\$225	Not offered	\$1250
Providence Funeral Home 807 Carlos Parker Blvd. NW Taylor 512-352-5909	\$1620	\$3210	\$5970	\$6370	\$1295	\$1695	\$795	Not offered	\$75	Not offered	\$1895
Superior Memorial Services 1916 Tillery Street Austin 512-478-4300	\$970	\$1790	\$4740 (11)	\$5740 (11)	\$995	\$1995	\$595	\$200	\$50	\$595	\$495
Thomason Funeral Home (17) 2001 Ranch Road 12 San Marcos 512-396-2300	\$3015	\$3245	\$5525 (11)	\$6625 (11)	\$495	\$1595	\$550	\$150	\$100	Not offered	\$2150
Weed-Corley-Fish Funeral Home (18) 3125 N. Lamar Austin 512-452-8811	\$2445	\$3280	\$6625	\$7325	\$1295	\$1995	\$695	\$295	\$95	\$875	\$2195

*The pricing and categories of services and goods used in this chart are explained in the narrative on the back of this chart

Highlighted funeral providers have contracted to provide goods and services to AMBIS members at a 15% discount

Footnotes

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| <p>(1) Service programs not offered, but estimated at \$50
(2) Owned by Mission Funeral Home
(3) Includes \$50 additional charge for refrigeration after 24 hours
(4) Location also at 8507 North IH 35 in Austin at same prices
(5) An additional charge of \$50 to secure necessary documents in counties outside of Travis or the actual cost charged by an agent to procure necessary documents; other charges may apply to have cremation done in less than 7 days from date of completion of authorizations</p> | <p>(6) Also owns DeLeon Funeral Home, 110 Cedar Street, Lockhart, with prices about 12% less
(7) Locations at same prices at 4765 Priem Lane, Pflugerville, and at 1700 E. Whitestone, Cedar Park
(8) Owned by Service Corporation International (SCI)
(9) Locations at same prices in Austin at 6100 N. Lamar Blvd., 6300 West William Cannon Dr., and 9700 Anderson Mill Rd.
(10) Refrigeration charge is for unembalmed remains and may apply each day at some funeral homes
(11) Some vehicles not offered on GPL. Costs are based on third party prices available in Austin area.
(12) Location at same prices in Dripping Springs at</p> | <p>Ranch Road 12 and West 290
(13) Charge for 3 days of refrigeration, then \$25 per day
(14) Location in San Marcos at prices about 10% less—Los Angeles Funeral Home, 300 Cheatham Street
(15) Provides only cremation. Offers package that includes an urn, one death certificate, and other services that may or may not be wanted, for \$1389
(16) Location at same prices in Lockhart—McCurdy Funeral Home at 105 East Pecan Street
(17) Location in Wimberly at Ranch Road 12 North at same prices
(18) Location at 2620 S. Congress in Austin—Wilke-Clay-Fish Funeral Home</p> |
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JANUARY 2008 SURVEY OF SELECTED PRICES CHARGED BY AUSTIN AREA FUNERAL HOMES ©

Compiled by the Austin Memorial and Burial Information Society (AMBIS)—A Funeral Consumers Alliance

The information supplied below was taken from a General Price List and Casket Price List provided by each funeral home as required by rules of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). **To determine any changes since early January 2008, contact the funeral home.** Funeral homes are required by the FTC to provide price information over the telephone and to supply a copy of a General Price List to anyone appearing in person and requesting it. Most provide a copy of a Casket Price List upon request, and must allow you to review their casket price list.

Survey procedures: This survey provides direct comparisons between all of the funeral homes listed for eleven categories of funeral services and merchandise, except as noted. The lack of uniformity in the formats and content of the General Price Lists (GPLs) provided by each funeral home can lead to confusion and misunderstanding by even informed consumers. In addition, some funeral homes bundle or package several services for one inclusive price that may save consumers money. However, not all such "package" deals provide discounts. Consumers must add up the several goods and services that make up a package to determine whether a discount is being offered. Every effort was made to assure that this survey compares the same exact services between all funeral homes surveyed. We have tried to explain any differences in footnotes. **You are urged to review the GPL of any funeral home in which you are interested.**

Definitions and descriptions used in this survey:

Direct Cremation is the transfer of the deceased from the place of death to a funeral home or mortuary facility, transportation of the body to the crematory, provision of an alternative container (usually a cremation tray—a heavy-duty cardboard container [or cardboard/wood combination], or an unadorned cremation casket made of fiberboard) to house the body during cremation, return of the cremated remains in a secure container to the family directly or making them available for pick-up at the funeral home, and securing all necessary permits, the costs of all services of the funeral director and staff, authorizations for the cremation, and the cost of the cremation itself (i.e., the fee charged by the crematory—from \$200 to \$550, depending on the crematory used). Funeral homes in the Austin area use crematories in Austin, Temple, Burnet, or San Antonio, which return cremated remains in a suitable container. None of the prices for Direct Cremation in the survey include the cost of a special container for holding the cremated remains (which can cost as little as \$20 at a discount department store or close to \$3,000 at some funeral homes), an urn outer burial vault (which can cost up to \$1000), any rite or ceremony, embalming, family's use of funeral home facilities, cost of obituary, or other services of staff. A few funeral services are now returning the cremated remains in inexpensive containers, rather than in the boxes supplied by the crematory. The price includes the cost of shelter and refrigeration at most funeral homes for the 48-hour waiting period between death and cremation, unless the waiting period is waived by an appropriate official, either a medical examiner or justice of the peace.

Immediate Burial is the transfer of the deceased from the place of death to a funeral home or mortuary facility, placement of the body in the funeral home's minimum casket (usually cloth-covered wood, wood with a veneer, or metal), transportation of the body to a cemetery or place of burial. The costs of all services of the funeral director and staff are included in the prices quoted. The average estimated costs of a gravesite, opening and closing the grave, a grave liner (which may be required by a cemetery to ease the task of grounds maintenance), and an obituary vary from about \$1600 to \$2500 in the Central Texas area. (It is possible to find cemetery gravesites outside of Austin for as little as \$100 or for a donation. Burial on private land outside a municipality can be done for the cost of opening and closing the grave. The prices do not include any rite or ceremony, embalming, family's use of funeral home facilities, or other services of staff. The price may include refrigeration at some funeral homes, but consumers should note the excessive charges for that service at many funeral homes.

Full Funeral is the category for a hypothetical funeral that includes fourteen goods or services. Two full-service funerals are shown on the chart—one with the least expensive 20 gauge metal casket, (usually without a gasket), and one with the least expensive 18 gauge metal casket (usually with a gasket), offered by each funeral home. An 18 gauge gasketed casket is the most common casket sold in the United States according to industry surveys. The full funeral service includes:

- (1) the basic services of the funeral director and staff, including overhead costs (the nondeclinable fee—NDF);
- (2) transport of the deceased from the place of death;
- (3) embalming;
- (4) other preparation of the body, such as dressing, casketing, and cosmetology;
- (5) purchase of one of the caskets noted above;
- (6) public viewing of the deceased's body and visitation for 4 to 8 hours;
- (7) a funeral service at the funeral home or another facility;
- (8) provision of a registration book;
- (9) 50 acknowledgment cards;
- (10) 100 programs or service folders;
- (11) use of a hearse for transport of the body to a cemetery;
- (12) use of a utility vehicle to carry flowers to a cemetery;
- (13) three vehicles—to transport family, clergy, and pallbearers to the cemetery (includes a lead car, if available);
- (14) direction of a graveside or committal service (usually included in the services offered as part of a full service funeral).

The prices for a Full Funeral **do not include** the opening and closing of a grave, a grave liner (which may be required by a cemetery to simplify grounds maintenance, but is not required by law), purchase of a grave space or plot, an obituary, flowers, services of clergy, organist, vocalist, or other musician, a police escort, or any other services or products not described above. The average estimated minimum cost for these services varies from **\$3000 to \$4500** in the Central Texas area. **These additional costs must be added to the cost of the funeral to get a true picture of the total cost of a full-service funeral and burial.** However, there are many other goods and services which can be purchased from funeral homes that can increase the cost of a funeral significantly, such as burial clothing, temporary gravemarkers, bronze caskets costing up to \$36,000, copper vaults costing \$13,000, extra viewing and visitation at

the funeral home, alternative casket interiors, a crucifix, a flag case, prayer cards, any special religious services (such as a wake), refrigeration of the body (if that is necessary), a temporary grave marker, use of chairs/awning/artificial grass at cemetery for a graveside or committal service, video presentations, and permanent grave markers or monuments.

Prices for the least expensive **20 gauge metal casket** and the least expensive **18 gauge metal casket** are included as separate items in the survey for comparison purposes. Several other items are included, also, for comparison because some funeral homes are using these items to obtain higher profits while, in some cases, they discount other items. These items are **embalming, refrigeration, alternative container, rental casket** (sometimes referred to as an accommodation or ceremonial casket), and the **nondeclinable fee**.

Non-declinable fee refers to the amount a funeral home may charge a consumer for the basic services provided by the funeral director and staff, and the business's overhead costs. The FTC currently permits this charge, even though all funeral home services and merchandise are sold to consumers at profitable mark-ups, which should include overhead costs in keeping with the customary accounting practices of most businesses. The average non-declinable fee nationally is around \$1,400; the Austin average is now about \$1960.

COST-SAVING SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSUMERS:

1. Choose immediate burial, a graveside service, or direct cremation followed by a religious or secular memorial service held almost anywhere people can gather together. This can reduce funeral costs by 75%. Or choose a reasonably-priced funeral home for 50% savings over average costs. If all services are held at a religious facility, the funeral home does not need to be in one's neighborhood.

2. Avoid embalming and viewing of the body in the funeral home's "slumber room," a practice promoted by many funeral directors as essential to the grief process. Instead, display pictures and mementos of the deceased at a gathering where sharing and visiting can occur that focuses on the memories of the deceased, rather than on an elaborately displayed body. (Embalming is not required by Texas law for any reason, and it has no public health benefits that have been recognized by any public health authority. The industry uses embalming to increase funeral costs dramatically by appealing to a person's desire to preserve and protect the body. It merely slows the natural decomposition process.)

3. If you need a casket, choose the least expensive available and cover it with a flag, the deceased's favorite quilt, a religious shroud or other cloth. The looks of the casket will be unimportant and the money saved can be put to a use significant to the deceased and survivors. (Remember, consumers can buy a casket from any source or supply their own homemade one without incurring any additional funeral home fees or charges.)

4. Don't be led to believe that the more spent on the funeral or the casket, the greater the love felt for the deceased. Most funeral directors have always been sales people. Unscrupulous funeral directors appeal to feelings of guilt, family pride, and social pressures to persuade consumers to spend lavishly.

5. Become informed consumers now. The funeral industry has depended on the fact that most consumers avoid death and its trappings until they are in the throes of grief just after the death of a loved one. Such feelings can make anyone vulnerable to exploitation. If faced with this situation, take along a trusted friend for assistance—one who is able to be less emotionally involved with the dozens of decisions to be made and who can give sound advice and help.

6. Check out religious questions with your minister, priest, rabbi, pastor, or other religious leader, rather than the funeral director.

7. Compare all the prices in the survey. If a funeral home is willing to gouge consumers for any service, consumers should beware. For instance, according to industry sources, refrigeration costs less than \$1.00 a day to provide when all acquisition and operation costs are considered, but 90% of funeral homes in our survey charge \$50 or more per day for the service, while three funeral homes charge nothing for refrigeration. Seventeen funeral homes charge from \$100 to \$595 per day for refrigeration; thirteen charge from \$65 to \$95. Many people who study the economics of the deathcare industry believe that high charges for refrigeration are used to assure that a family will choose embalming, a choice that usually results in additional spending for public viewing, a more expensive casket because it will be seen at close range by the public, and often a more expensive outer burial container so the expensive casket is better protected. Embalming is not required by law for public viewing, but most funeral directors will not allow a public viewing without embalming because it affects their profits.