

NEWS & INSIGHTS

“Green” burials: Coming soon near you?

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New disposition methods could be available soon in the mid-Atlantic, with multiple state governments recently making significant strides in environmentally friendly death care.

These new “green” death care methods of burial and cremation have gained popularity in the last few years because of the benefit to the environment, as they both reduce the carbon footprint of a traditional burial. States across the country have been examining the benefits of them, with some legalizing their use.

Mid-Atlantic state governments have been particularly busy with green burial approvals since the start of May.

Maryland's governor on May 19 signed into law the [Green Death Care Options Act](#), which legalizes and provides for the regulation of alkaline hydrolysis – also known as water cremation or aquamation – and natural organic reduction, sometimes referred to as “human composting.”

At one time, it was thought that alkaline hydrolysis was already legal in Maryland, but a 2023 [attorney general's opinion](#) concluded otherwise.

Delaware's governor followed suit on May 16 and signed into law [HB 162](#), which authorizes natural organic reduction to be used in that state.

In Pennsylvania, [HB 1172](#), which would legalize alkaline hydrolysis for human disposition, passed the House by a 138-63 vote on May 1 and is under consideration by the Senate. Alkaline hydrolysis is already legal for pet and animal disposition in Pennsylvania.

In New Jersey, [a bill](#) placing natural organic reduction under the jurisdiction of the State Board of Mortuary Science was unanimously voted out of committee on May 16.

These new forms of disposition are now legal in a growing number of states. Alkaline hydrolysis is legal in [about half the states](#), while [10 states](#) now allow natural organic reduction.

If you are a death care provider with questions about these or other new methods of disposition, please contact attorney [Jason Benion](#).

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