

2003 Annual Survey of Funeral Costs & Pricing Practices in Leon County

	High	Low	Range	Average
Basic Service¹	\$1675	\$375 ²	\$1270	\$1025
Transfer to Funeral Home (35-50 mile radius)	\$290	\$95	\$105	\$125
Funeral Coach (Hearse)	\$225	\$95	\$130	\$155
Limousine (per vehicle)	\$200	\$135	\$35	\$125
Embalming	\$695	\$350	\$345	\$265
Caskets³	\$18,500	\$4445	\$450	\$1045
“Alternative Container”⁴	\$495	\$175	\$330	\$197
Burial Vaults⁵	\$9975	\$1445	\$450	\$850
Immediate Burial⁶	\$2428	\$995	\$1433	\$1243
Direct Cremation⁷	\$1450	\$950	\$550	\$1100
Body Donation⁸	\$2025	\$450 + transportation	\$1575	Not Available

¹ This ‘non-declinable’ basic service charge is authorized under the FTC “Funeral Rule.” The justification of this fee has changed from time to time, but the idea is that funeral homes are allowed to recoup some of their ‘overhead’ (or basic cost of providing services) to customers, regardless of the services which an individual customer solicits. In general, consumer advocates oppose this charge, and The Funeral Consumers Alliance has petitioned the FTC with an eye to eliminating this expense to consumers.

² This figure is somewhat misleading, because on this price list the basic service charge was associated with particular, itemized services. This is a technical violation of the FTC “Funeral Rule,” although it does make sense.

³ On the FTC price list, funeral homes typically offer a price range for caskets, and inform customers that a price list will be available upon request. Obviously, there are many, many types of caskets---cardboard, wood steel, bronze---and it is extremely difficult to derive fair comparisons. A more helpful index may be typical markups from wholesale, which range from 250% to 750%, and occasionally even more. Also, funeral homes will not always tell consumers that any casket not in stock can be delivered within 24 hours.

⁴ This refers to the ‘minimum’ container supplied to transport the body to a crematory. Price information is sometimes hard to extract from the GPL, because the cost of this container is sometimes subsumed under the package price for “Direct Cremation” (see below). Funeral homes may obtain a wide range of such containers, and often do not keep in stock the least expensive containers on the market.

⁵ As with caskets, there is a great variety of burial vaults and other ‘external containers.’ They can be made of cement or welded bronze. These containers are not required by law for earth burial, but many cemeteries do require their use to facilitate maintenance.

⁶ Immediate Burial includes ONLY transfer of the body to the funeral home, minimal preparation, casketing in a ‘least expensive’ casket, and delivery to the grave site. It does not include any cemetery costs.

⁷ Direct Cremation involves ONLY transfer of the body to the funeral home, minimal preparation, placing the body in a minimum-cost container, delivery to the crematorium, and delivery of the cremated remains to a designated representative. Some funeral homes list a range of prices including the cost of any casket purchased. In this case, we have tried to compare prices based on the least expensive casket kept in stock, according to the casket price list.

⁸ Not all funeral homes list a package price for this option. Unless death occurs in a hospital related to a medical school or a research hospital, body donation will involve *arterial* embalming (not the more costly and invasive “cosmetic” embalming), and the package price may or may not include the cost of transportation to the nearest facility which will receive the body. Body donation will almost always require prearrangement with the receiving facility.