



INFORMATION AND ADVICE ON MEMORIAL SAFETY

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Why are we carrying out Headstone Safety Inspections?

This work is required to ensure our cemeteries are safe places for visitors and employees. Tragically, there have been a number of incidents in other cemeteries around the country where unstable memorials have toppled onto people, including children, resulting in fatalities and serious injury. The Health and Safety Executive are taking an active interest in Memorial Safety and have issued warnings to Local Authorities to insist they have policies and procedures in place to ensure the stability of memorials. The Council has a responsibility for the safety of visitors in the cemeteries.

Who are the Health and Safety Executive?

The Health and Safety Executive is a central government enforcement agency responsible for the general Health and Safety in public areas.

Who is responsible for keeping my memorial repaired and in a safe condition?

The grave owner is responsible for keeping the headstone/memorial repaired and in a safe condition. However, the council has the obligation of making our cemeteries safe and can use reasonable means to make safe any unsafe memorials. A warning notice will be attached if it is found to be in an unsafe condition. The work must be carried out by a memorial mason currently registered with BRAMM (The British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons.) Any upright headstone to be re fixed must now have a ground anchor system fitted to ensure its future safety.

What does the safety test involve and who carries out the test?

Each headstone will be given a visual check to assess the condition of the memorial. Each headstone will then be given gentle, hands on push test to check the memorial's stability. The result of the test is recorded. The memorials are being tested in house by qualified staff. The testing and pressure exerted are being carried out to nationally accepted standards

What will you do with headstones that fail the test?

Once a headstone is found to be unsafe the council has a duty of care to make sure it is safe immediately because the cemetery is a public place. Depending on size and type we will make it safe by either: -

- Providing a make safe support/banded system
- Lowering the memorial into the ground by a third of its height
- Laying the memorial down on the grave with the inscription upper most
- Cordoning off very large memorials and seeking the opinion of a structural engineer

Will you inform me if my memorial fails?

Our immediate priority is to make safe any unstable memorials found during the inspection to ensure our cemeteries are safe places for the public to enter. The council cannot use public money to fund repairs to what is essentially a grave owner's property.

We will write to grave owners of unsafe memorials at the last known address taken from our records as soon as possible following the inspection. If we have not contacted you it may be because we do not have a record of your current address. Details can be updated by contacting the Cemetery Office on 01905 722633 or via email at [bereavementservices @Worcester.gov.uk](mailto:bereavementservices@Worcester.gov.uk) .

Will my headstone be subjected to further tests in the future?

Yes, we will be carrying out these tests at regular intervals in the future. All memorials will be inspected at least every five years.

Advice on your memorial

The Cemetery and Crematorium Office will be happy to help you with all information to make the memorial safe. Worcester City Council strongly recommends that headstones should be insured.