

Saturday, 8 November 2025

Hospital Authority enhanced mortuary charge arrangement free storage period extended to 28 days

The Hospital Authority (HA) announced today (November 8) the enhanced public hospital mortuary charge arrangement, following a review and prudent consideration of feedback from the public and stakeholders, so as to encourage efficient use of mortuary resources while addressing the needs of the majority of citizens.

With an ageing population, the number of deaths in public hospitals has been steadily rising from approximately 32 000 in 2007 to over 41 000 in 2024, representing a 28 per cent increase. The HA has been adding resources for hospital mortuary storage space. The number of spaces has been significantly increased from 1 500 in 2007 to approximately 3 360 currently, marking a 124 per cent increase. The ratio of mortuary storage spaces to hospital beds has increased from 1:18 in 2007 to 1:9 in 2024.

To facilitate funeral arrangements for the public, the HA has been processing death certificate applications as quickly as possible. Over 95 per cent of death certificates can be issued within three working days, and more than 99 per cent within seven working days. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department also pledges to provide cremation sessions within 15 days.

However, the average duration of storage of bodies in HA mortuaries continues to increase, with approximately 10 per cent of bodies being stored for more than a month, and some even exceeding one year. Due to the prolonged storage, the occupancy rate of HA mortuaries frequently exceeds 100 per cent. Taking 2024 as an example, eight out of 38 hospital mortuaries experienced occupancy rates exceeding 100 per cent between February and May. During the service demand surge in 2025, 13 mortuaries recorded above 100 per cent occupancy rates. Given the limited resources in public hospitals, the HA needs to effectively balance the allocation of resources between mortuaries, which serve as temporary body storage facilities, and patient care services.

"The introduction of mortuary charge does not aim at increasing the HA's revenue. It adheres to the principle of 'co-payment by those who can afford' and reducing wastage, encouraging families to collect the deceased bodies to arrange funerals as soon as possible, thereby alleviating pressure and overcrowding situation in public hospital mortuaries. After listening to extensive feedback from the public and stakeholders recently, the HA has agreed to enhance the mortuary charge arrangements by extending the free storage period. This will allow families more adequate time to process death documentation, to prepare the funeral arrangement, and book cremation sessions, while also reducing their financial burden," the HA spokesperson said.

After prudent consideration, the HA has decided to extend the free storage period from three days, as stated in the initial arrangement, to 28 days. The details are as follows:

Initial arrangement	
Duration of body storage	Mortuary charge
First 3 days	No charge
From day 4	\$100 per day
From day 18	\$200 per day
From day 34	\$550 per day

Enhanced arrangement	
Duration of body storage	Mortuary charge
First 28 days	No charge
From day 29	\$200 per day
From day 36	\$550 per day

According to the past data, the median storage duration for bodies in HA mortuaries is approximately three weeks, with over 80 per cent of cases having storage periods of 28 days or less. Under the enhanced arrangement, the majority of deceased patient cases will not incur any charges. Among the remaining cases, it is estimated that another 10 per cent can have fee waivers through various mechanisms. Overall, it is projected that less than 10 per cent of all cases will ultimately need to pay for the charge.

"We believe that extending the free storage period to 28 days will provide most families with ample and reasonable time to manage the funeral arrangement for their deceased relatives, enabling a more focused approach on handling cases with extended mortuary stays. This adjustment aims to alleviate public concerns, ensuring that the new charge arrangement achieves the goal of effective utilisation of public resources while reflecting care and compassion for bereaved families," the HA spokesperson said.

The spokesperson reiterated that the comprehensive fee waiver mechanisms for families with financial difficulties or special circumstances will remain unchanged. These mechanisms include fee waivers for eligible recipients of financial assistance, fee reductions based on medical fee waiver ratios, and exemptions for delays caused by factors beyond families' control, such as the coroner's inquests. If families experience financial difficulties in affording the mortuary charge for their deceased relatives, they can seek assistance from the hospital to help them apply for fee waivers based on their actual situations.

The HA expresses gratitude for the constructive feedback from all sectors of society regarding the mortuary charge, which has been crucial in refining the arrangement. We hope that the new arrangement will strike an appropriate balance between encouraging efficient use of public resources and showing compassion for the public.

The HA has considered various factors while determining the mortuary charge, including operational costs and charge levels for similar services in the market. The HA has been working to enhance mortuary services in recent years, including the setup of farewell rooms or similar facilities in certain hospitals, allowing families to arrange for the direct transfer of bodies from the hospital to cremation or burial services.

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