

Health and Safety

Risk Management Strategy for Safe headstones

1. Public Information

The strategy for advising the public about the ongoing work being undertaken and the results of this work should include:

- a) Displaying notices on notice boards advising of the strategy, the potential dangers posed by headstones and the action the public should take if they have concerns about a particular headstone
- b) Displaying warning notices around the cemetery, as appropriate
- c) Including a headstone safety leaflet with every new grave-deed issued and supplying the leaflet for issue by funeral directors to their clients who use Halton's cemeteries
- d) Publicising headstone safety issues as appropriate via press releases and at "open days" etc.
- e) *Whenever possible, contacting the grave-deed owner to advise of the condition of a specific headstone and any action taken or about to be taken to combat the danger*

2. Halton Borough Council's strategy for safe headstones

Category 1a – If a headstone is found to be very unstable (*high risk*), *it should be made temporarily safe when discovered (and so become a Category 4), but if this is not possible* it should be laid-down flat when discovered.

Category 1 – If a headstone is found to be unstable and requires remedial work, but is not in imminent danger of collapse (*medium risk*), *whenever possible it should be made temporarily safe (and so become a Category 4). This action should be taken as soon as practicable, but certainly within 3 months. If it is not possible to make such a headstone temporarily safe*, a warning sticker should be placed on the headstone inviting the visitor to consult cemetery management in order to resolve the situation.

Category 2 – If a headstone is not unstable, but has cracked joints etc. with the potential to become unstable (*medium risk*), it shall be re-inspected within 1 year.

Category 3 – If a headstone is not unstable and is in good condition (*low risk*), it shall be re-inspected within 5 years.

Category 4 – Headstones that have been made temporarily safe (low risk). A sample of 100 headstones made temporarily safe during the first-wave of the making-safe exercise (November 06 to March 07) will be retested annually. As soon as one such headstone fails this test, all such "first-wave" headstones will be re-inspected (and this failure shall inform the re-inspection period for all other headstones temporarily made safe). Otherwise, all such headstones shall fall to be re-inspected within 5 years.

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3. **Specification for individuals or companies erecting new, or repairing unsafe memorials**

A specification for erecting headstones should be given to all stonemasons who are authorised to work in the Council's cemeteries. A tender document should also be prepared in order that the Council, should it decide, might organise the repair of an unsafe headstone. ~~*(Note: the re-cementing of failed cement joints is accepted by the Council as one method of repairing an unsafe headstone).*~~

4. **The responsibilities for the relative/visitor to the headstone.**

It is proposed that a warning sign will indicate that there is a problem with a memorial and the relative/visitor will be given a twelve-month period for the headstone to be repaired in accordance with the approved national standard ~~*(or re-cemented as per the note above).*~~ If the headstone is not repaired within this period, the Council will organise its laying-flat, or its repair, as appropriate.

5. **Assistance to Relatives/Visitors**

An approved list of contractors will be provided, together with details of the current national standard and specifications, which would be required, should the relatives/visitors wish to repair the problem themselves.

6. **Headstones above 2 metres in height**

It is proposed that a structural engineer should be employed to test the safety of these headstones. The results from the findings will be dealt with under the process outlined earlier.

7. ***Headstones of 610 mm (2 ft) in height, or smaller***

Due to their small size and following a risk assessment, small headstones are considered to be outside the scope of this risk management strategy and the Council's memorial inspection procedure.