

CATHOLIC CEMETERIES - DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
CEMETERY MEMORIAL TOPPLE TEST REPORT (2015)

INSPECTION INFORMATION:

Day & Date:

Time:

Section-Range-Lot:

Name of Cemetery:

VISUAL INSPECTION (Check all that apply):

Poor Repair/Condition Ground Foundation

Trip hazard Bronze- Marker Reset to grade

Memorial Separation from base

Ground Movement causing tilting

Stone Cross snapped/cracked at joint to plinth

Poorly set monument to foundation

Incorrect bonding of pieces (bronze-granite) (granite-granite) (granite-foundation)

OTHER (please specify) :

PHYSICAL INSPECTION (Part I) " hand test " : (see photo for inspection grip and stance for safety)

If the memorial can be significantly moved then it is deemed to have failed the physical test and is unsafe.

Based on the statement above **IS THIS MEMORIAL SAFE ? (YES/NO)**

Is this memorial stable?

PHYSICAL INSPECTION (Part II) " machine test " : (recommended for engineering review and contractor action).

If a memorial **can be slightly moved with a hand test** then the third phase will be implementing a "Toppler Test" machine.

(Toppler tester machine should not be used on a memorial over 4 feet in height). Should the memorial fail the Toppler test then it is deemed to be unsafe and the appropriate action will be taken.

Based on the Toppler Test reading this machine is safe? Safe

Based on the Toppler Test reading this machine is unsafe? Unsafe

RISK ASSESSMENT (Choose appropriate category) :

Category 1 - Memorial is in an immediate dangerous condition (failed hand test). Remedial action taken at this time of the inspection by identification with health and safety tape, warning notice attached stating possible danger, memorial is to be laid down within 24 hours of identification or fitting of appropriate stabilizing device.

Category 2 – Memorial is a high risk (failed topple test), prompt action required to make the memorial safe or prevent access. Identified with health and safety tape, warning notice attached stating high risk and asking owner to contact cemetery authorities and arrange for memorial correction in 4 weeks time or failure to do so will result in the memorial to be laid down.

Category 3 – Memorial is considered to be unstable but not in immediate threat to public safety, requires basic works to consolidate and stabilize, carry out repair works or re-inspect within 6 months.

Category 4 – Memorial is not an immediate danger to health and safety but showing some signs of instability. Condition to be monitored re-inspect in one year.

Category 5 – Memorial is in a stable condition and not presenting any obvious safety hazard, passed hand test and topple test and requires no action re-inspect in 5 years.

Print Name of Cemetery Representative:

Cemetery Representative Signature: X

Copies Attached: Police/Fire/Agency report Photographs Security Log Cemetery Map Other

Photos of Inspection Processes



Finger / Hand test



Topple Test Equipment



Topple Test Equipment



Sample method to stabilize memorial



The "A" Frame in use.

Catholic Cemeteries

Memorial Safety Policy

Revised July 2015

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Historically, health & safety concerns in cemeteries have focused on the risks arising from grave digging. In recent years there has been increasing attention on the stability of memorials and the risks these present to cemetery staff and visitors.
- 1.2 Catholic Cemeteries has been pro-active in taking measures to deal with head stone safety. Memorial Companies are registered and insured to ensure proper installation and to prevent further risks within Catholic Cemeteries.
- 1.3 An accident to a member of the public at any of our facilities can result in a fatality in therefore we are led to Enforcement Notices being served on lot owners at Catholic Cemeteries to make safe any headstones found to be 'in immediate danger of falling'. The notices related to Catholic Cemeteries are complied with the terms of the notice and carried out the necessary tests at all the diocesan cemeteries.

2.0 Duties

- 2.1 Primary responsibility for health and safety in Catholic Cemeteries lies with the burial authority in control of the cemetery. Catholic Cemeteries is required to control the risks associated with any cemetery for which they have responsibility.
- 2.2 Catholic Cemeteries has overall responsibility for the safety of the cemetery, including risks from unstable memorials, it does not own the memorials. The owner of the memorial will be the original owner (often called a grave owner). In many cases there is no identifiable owner.
- 2.3 Catholic Cemeteries has a responsibility to staff (under OSHA and its General Health & Safety Policies and a responsibility to visitors. The Management of Health & Safety at the workplace places a moral as well as a legal duty on Catholic Cemeteries to assess the risks from cemetery structures and work activities and ensure that the risks are controlled.

3.0 Immediate Danger

- 3.1 In cases of immediate danger, Catholic Cemeteries is empowered under the provision of its administrative and monument rules and regulations to take immediate action to make safe dangerous memorials.
- 3.2 **Catholic Cemeteries is does not desire to take direct action to remove an unstable memorial that presents no immediate risk without following the strict procedures laid down in its rules and policy statements.**

Posting public notices, seeking the permission of owners (if they can be contacted) before taking action.

- 3.3 **The responsibility for ongoing maintenance of individual memorials rests with the original owner (often called grave owners).**

4.0 Guidance

- 4.1 The first recommendation being that **‘a clear policy should be in place with set standards for management of memorial stability’**. Further recommendations on training, inspections are covered in the following paragraphs of this policy document.

5.0 Training

- 5.1 **‘All staff should be trained to carry out inspection of unstable memorials’** A specific training course has been designed for Catholic Cemeteries employees. The content of the inspection process was formulated by our staff, Health & Safety officers, and consultation of structural engineers.
- 5.3 Topics covered during the training course include: Testing Method, Consistency, Marking and Record Keeping, Manual Handling and Personal Protective Clothing.
- 5.4 Training is provided prior to all checks and working in teams ensures consistency.

6.0 Initial Inspection Program

- 6.1 **An initial inspection should be carried out to identify any memorials posing an immediate danger to the public.** This inspection has been completed in all Catholic Cemeteries. All memorials posing an immediate danger to the public have been carefully laid flat. Actions in relation to the initial tests have been recorded (information fixed to individual headstones and letters to last known current holder (original owner or next of kin (AKA grave owner)).

7.0 Fuller Inspection Program & Frequency

- 7.1 Inspection '**A fuller inspection should be carried out to ensure that memorials in cemeteries are safe and that actions taken are properly recorded and maintained**'. An inspection program has been drawn up and is in place for all Cemeteries. This is a 'rolling program approach' which Catholic Cemeteries describe as a '**reasonable**'.
- 7.2 Frequency
'**The frequency of inspection is for Catholic Cemeteries to decide as part of their assessment and review procedures**' It is possible to vary inspection frequency based on age, size and condition of the memorial. To reduce risks and eliminate the potential for errors or omissions Catholic Cemeteries will inspect every memorial within every cemetery on the same frequency as outlined in Section 8.0
- 7.3 Action '**If memorials are in immediate danger of falling, then cemetery management should take immediate action by either: laying them down, structurally supporting them, cordoning them off; or carrying out immediate repairs. In addition warning signs should be considered throughout the cemetery**' see Section 8.0 Options

8.0 Options

- 8.1 **Laying Down Memorials** - This is the most effective way to quickly reduce the risk of falling, it is however not without problems which include – damage to memorials, distress to families, tripping/slipping hazards
- 8.2 **Structurally Supporting Memorials** - This option reduces some of the problems outlined in paragraph 8.1 however, it is a time consuming and expensive option. Many memorials cannot be supported without presenting tripping hazards from scaffolding etc.
- 8.3 **Cordoning Memorials** - This is considered to be the cheapest and quickest option but it is the least effective. Visitors and Funeral Parties are prevented from accessing grave spaces and the integrity of cordons can easily be breached. Yellow memorial covers have been used on a trial basis but serve only as a means of alerting a hazard. These options do not remove the risk and are considered to be useful a temporary emergency measure.
- 8.4 **Immediate Repairs** - This option, once favored by Catholic Cemeteries has been somewhat ruled out by our inspections and described as a 'Gold Standard' which takes a blinkered view and is too time consuming to be fully effective in removing risks.

9.0 Catholic Cemeteries Approach to Inspection & Repair

Having considered all guidance, industry standards and the options outlined in Section 8 of this policy document, Catholic Cemeteries will implement the following approach

- 9.1 **Inspection** - All staff carrying out inspections have been trained by Catholic Cemeteries under the direction of structural engineers. A hand push test is used and not 'topple tester' device. A current risk assessment and method statement are in place. Cemetery staff should only inspect memorials, which are below 4 feet high. **Memorials above four feet will require specialist inspections (structural engineers). These memorials will be identified during the routine inspections and a list forwarded to the specialist as soon as the inspection of that Cemetery is complete.**
- 9.2 **Frequency** - Year 1 (2015/16) & Year 2 (2016/17) 6 monthly push test of every memorial headstone. Summer and Winter checks. Year 3 (2017/18) Review of scheme.
- 9.3 **Action** - Memorials found to be 'in immediate danger of falling' will be carefully lowered to the ground in accordance with the training given. At a later stage, if funding allows and families cannot be traced inlaying of memorials may take place, particularly where access is restricted. This will be dependant on the size and condition of the memorial and availability of lifting equipment.
- 9.4 **Records** - A record shall be kept of any action taken in relation to memorial safety, a chronology of meetings, actions is retained by the Field Operations Manager. This document provides a true reflection of the Catholic Cemeteries' commitment to memorial safety.

Inspection Records shall be made for every inspection and documents retained by the Field Operations Manager for a period of 3 years.
- 9.5 **Signage** - Permanent warning signs are on display throughout all cemeteries outlining the potential danger of unstable memorials. Additional signs have been provided and further signs/notice boards are to be displayed to raise awareness among visitors.
- 9.6 **Notification** - Notification of any action in relation to an individual memorial will be sent to the last known address of the current holder for the grave/lot record. Additional notification will be fixed to memorials following any action taken by Catholic Cemeteries.
- 9.7 **Funding** - Monies allocated from Catholic Cemeteries operation budget for Year 1 (2015/16) has been partly spent on the initial inspection program – training, protective clothing etc. The remaining monies will be invested in the lease or purchase of lifting equipment to enable inlaying of memorials. This will significantly reduce the problems identified with the options in Section 8, distress to families, tripping hazards etc.

This equipment will enable memorials to be lifted from their original position and sunk into the ground at a depth that will ensure stability. This is an accepted industry approach to repairs of older style large memorials.

- 9.8 **The Memorial – Monument Dealers** - The success of this plan is apparent during the initial inspection of all newly set memorials by the monument department staff. No memorials fitted since the introduction of the post setting inspection failed to pass the initial test. This is attributed to the cemetery's requirement to install memorials to the code and/or working practice issued by Catholic Cemeteries using an accredited ground anchor system.
- 10.0 The integrity of the Catholic Cemeteries memorial inspection process will continue to be enforced by the vigilance of all Catholic Cemeteries staff and members of monument dealers in our area.

Public Information Leaflet Memorial Safety



Catholic Cemeteries are currently under going another safety maintenance to headstones throughout our diocesan cemeteries.

Your local catholic cemetery has been proactive to take active measures on managing memorials in their cemeteries. New guidelines from Catholic Cemeteries means that all new memorials being installed continue to comply with a rigid specification.

As you would expect, a number of old memorials have become unstable over the years. Foundations have deteriorated; joints have not been doweled (bolted) and have become loose. In some cases where dowels have been used, they have become rusted and unsafe.

Also unexpectedly, inspections found that a large number of recently installed memorials were in a dangerous condition.

Memorials had not been doweled from the plate to the base and/or from the base to the foundation. Inspections showed that in most cases a thin layer of cement was the only fixing and that these joints had become weathered/loose, which therefore put the stone in a dangerous condition.

Catholic Cemeteries has produced memorial installation specifications, which aims to protect the public and allow them to have confidence that their memorial/ headstones are erected in a safe manner in the future.

Further guidelines from Catholic Cemeteries must inspect all memorials (which they are responsible for) in less than 12 months. This means that Catholic Cemeteries will have to take immediate action.

If your headstone was installed prior to our installation guidelines there is a possibility it may be unsafe and Catholic Cemeteries may be required to take the following action, lie the stone flat, stake and band monument so that Catholic Cemeteries comply with the relevant health & safety laws.

If you have any concerns about your headstone or would wish to discuss the matter further, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the cemetery staff or telephone the main office of Catholic Cemeteries at 516.334.7990.

Catholic Cemeteries takes the safety of the public and employees seriously; it is with this in mind that we have introduced the above measures. Whilst we understand that it may be upsetting to some lot owners and bereaved families, it is also essential that we ensure that cemeteries can be safe environments for all.

Catholic Cemeteries will be able to assist members of the public when they are making decisions on purchasing a memorial or have concerns with regard to its safety. Staff will also be able to address any specific questions relating to the safety inspection program.

Q&A s --- Right of Burial "only" ?

Q. Who owns the memorial/headstone?

A. A memorial/headstone is owned by the Original Lot Owner (or family). Catholic Cemeteries do not own any headstones or memorials on a family owned lot.

Q. What does an inspection involve?

A. Trained employees carry out a visual, manual and if appropriate a mechanical test using a topple tester. This machine measures a push on the stone at shoulder height to a 35kg force. All findings are recorded and stored, photographs are taken where necessary.

Q. Can I be held responsible for my headstone?

A. Yes. Lot owners can be held responsible both legally and for the cost of any remedial work to make the stones safe.

Q. Can I inspect my own memorial?

A. No, many memorials are extremely dangerous. Members of the public are therefore asked not to carry out any work that may endanger them.

Q. Can I repair my own memorial?

A. No. Prior to any work being instructed a permit must be applied for, this can be obtained from Catholic Cemeteries office. There may be a charge for a permit. Catholic Cemeteries would insist that a registered and insured Memorial Company carry out any improvement repair work.

Q. Will Catholic Cemeteries re-erect my memorial for me?

A. No. Catholic Cemeteries are however looking at training staff in erecting memorials and may consider this service in the future.

Q. Why are Catholic Cemeteries carrying out this work?

A. Due to a number of deaths and injuries including young children, safety in cemeteries is now a major issue to Local Authorities. OSHA & Health and Safety as well as general liability concerns, requires that as owners of the cemetery, Catholic Cemeteries take all steps that are reasonably practicable to make the premises safe for visitors, users and employees.

Q. Do Monument Dealers have to be registered to work in Catholic Cemeteries?

A. Yes. Catholic Cemeteries hold a list of all registered and insured memorial companies. This list is available from your local catholic cemetery office.

Q. What happens if a Memorial is unsafe and the Lot Owner cannot be traced?

A. Catholic Cemeteries will assume responsibility to make the Memorial Safe, as detailed.

Q. Can ownership be transferred to another family member if the original lot owner cannot be traced?

A. In exceptional circumstances and on production of legal and administrative confirmation, Catholic Cemeteries may allow such transfers.

Memorial safety check and repair

The information is aimed to help you understand why it is necessary for Catholic Cemeteries to carry out safety tests on memorials to ensure a safe environment for visitors and staff, what the safety tests involve and how the testing process may effect you.

If you know anyone who visits a cemetery or owns a memorial please advise them to read this information.

Why are we testing memorials?

Health and Safety concerns within burial grounds focus on the increased risk to the public from unstable memorials. Despite a number of accidents in the past it was not until the death of a child that the extent of the problem was realized.

Many accidents have been caused by memorials toppling over. Sometimes they have been weakened by children playing around. Another times children are harmed when these memorials become unstable for various reasons, for example due to the poor ground conditions, failure of the foundation, inadequate jointing of parts, poorly executed repairs or general weathering and erosion, and eventually fall over.

The Health and Safety program of Catholic Cemeteries has made it clear that we require a suitable inspection program for memorials to ensure the health and safety of the public. It is a legal requirement under OSHA and the general health and safety workplace programs. The safety inspections are also in line with advice from the cemetery's insurance company.

With growing public concern, serious accidents, including fatalities during years many cemeteries have adopted similar programs. This involved adopting a corporately written strategy, implementing a 5 year rolling inspection program and a system for assessing the risk posed by unstable memorials. Catholic Cemeteries appreciate that the testing and making safe memorials may cause upset to bereaved families, but our priority has to be the safety of those people visiting and working within the burial grounds.

Who is responsible for the safety of a memorial?

Responsibility in the first instance rests with the purchaser or owner of the memorial, or the memorial company who installs the memorial. However in most instances, those memorials which are dangerous and requiring works to make them safe are many years old and the purchaser, owner or stone memorial company who erected the memorial cannot be traced.

Ultimately Catholic Cemeteries maintaining cemeteries are under a duty of care to ensure that they are safe places for staff and visitors and are therefore responsible for carrying out safety checks on memorials, to ensure that they are in a good and stable condition and not likely to topple over.

Which burial grounds are maintained by Catholic Cemeteries?

Cemetery of the Holy Rood, Westbury NY, Queen of All Saints Cemetery, Central Islip NY, and Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Coram NY. Parish Cemeteries of the Diocese of Rockville Centre are owned and operated by the parish, Catholic Cemeteries, on behalf of the parishes may conduct such inspections on behalf the parish upon request and agreement, however it does not form as part of our annual inspection program of Catholic Cemeteries.

What do the safety tests involve and who will carry them out?

Catholic Cemeteries managers, supervisors, and employees have undertaken training in the Management of Memorials and will be carrying out all of the memorial testing using a procedure recommended by the memorial industry and professional associations.

The inspection of the memorials will be carried out using a 4 stage inspection process:

1 Visual

Firstly a visual inspection of each individual memorial within the burial ground is carried out, the memorials details are recorded, information such as the inscription, memorial type, materials etc, then a

2 Physical test part 1 "hand test"

Secondly a "hand test" is then carried out to initially assess the memorials stability. This will take place on all memorials up to a height of around 4 feet (memorials over 4 feet will be surveyed under a separate inspection). If the memorial can be significantly moved then it is deemed to have failed the physical test and is unsafe.

3 Physical test part 2 "machine test"

If the memorial can be slightly moved with the hand test then the third phase could be implemented using a "Topple Tester" machine. The topple tester will not be used on memorials over 4 feet. Should the memorial fail the topple test then it is deemed to be unsafe and the appropriate action will be taken. An engineering plan and the services of a professional contractor should be sought for the machine test of memorials.

4 Risk Assessment

Finally a risk assessment is carried out. On completion of the above physical tests the memorial is then classified into one of the 5 risk assessment categories shown as follows:

Category 1

Memorial is in an immediately dangerous condition (failed hand test). Remedial action taken at the time of the inspection by identification with health and safety tape, warning notice attached stating possible danger, memorial is to be laid down within 24 hours of identification. Or fitting of appropriate stabilizing device.

Category 2

Memorial is a high risk (failed topple test), prompt action required to make the memorial safe or prevent access. Identified with health and safety tape, warning notice attached stating high risk and asking owner to contact the Council or carry our repair works within 4 weeks or memorial will be laid down.

Category 3

Memorial is considered to be unstable but not an immediate threat to public safety, requires basic works to consolidate and stabilize, carry out repair works or re-inspect within 6 months.

Category 4

Memorial not an immediate danger to health and safety but showing some signs of instability. Condition to be monitored re-inspect in one year.

Category 5

Memorial is in a stable condition and not presenting any obvious safety hazard, passed hand test and topple test and requires no action re-inspect in 5 years.

All of the above details are then recorded in an inspection schedule.