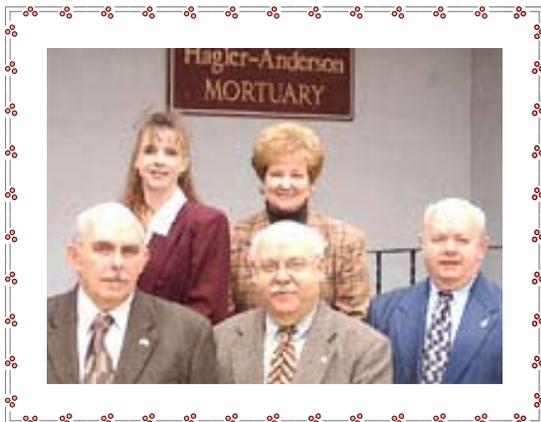




- Sensible
- Compassionate
- Experienced
- Professional
- Assuring
- Comforting
- Trustworthy



Hagler-Anderson Mortuary & Anderson Cremation Services
 By MOLLY SERVERTSON- Helena Independent Record
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Since January, Hagler-Anderson Mortuary, one of Helena's oldest firms, has been operating a new crematory on Bozeman Avenue. Hagler-Anderson built the new facility to meet an increased demand in Montana for cremation services. According to the Cremation Association of North America, 57.17 percent of the deaths in Montana were cremated in 2004, the seventh highest rate in the nation. This high rate is due to many factors, including the lower cost of cremation, the simplicity of the process, the fact that cremation

saves land, and the state's more migratory society.

"As a society, we have become more mobile now, people are scattered around more away from their roots," said Anderson Crematory manager Jay Ramlo. "You don't have the ties to the family plot in the local cemetery that people used to have."

In the past, the staff at Hagler-Anderson had transported decedents to a facility in Bozeman for cremation two to three times a week, a trip that was hazardous on Montana's winter roads. As demand for cremation increased, the firm decided to build the new facility. While most funeral homes set up a crematory in an adjacent garage, Hagler-Anderson's new facility is one of only two in the state that is located in a building separate from the mortuary.

The new facility's retort, or cremation machine, is a costly piece of equipment that was purchased in Orlando, Fla. The machine heats a body to close to 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, with the process of cremation taking from two to four hours. At the new facility, loved ones of the deceased have the option of watching some of the cremation process, as members of some cultures prefer, through windows into the cremation room that can be covered and uncovered as needed. The new facility also has the space to accommodate viewing and small family funeral services.

A wide selection of urns is available for purchase at the facility, along with catalog sales of pet urns. The facility also includes an office and a comfortable waiting area where people are welcome to wait for their loved one's remains if they wish. The cremation room was also built with space for a second retort if demand for cremation service should increase to the point where one would be needed.

The new crematory is required to be approved by the Department of Environmental Quality of the state of Montana, with emissions closely monitored and controlled. The facilities operator, Brent Anderson, and three technicians, Jay Ramlo, Ray Sheldon and Carolyn Anderson, are all licensed and certified by the Montana State Board of Funeral Directors, and the facility is duly licensed by the City of Helena.

There are many rules governing the process of cremation, including a requirement that a person must be dead at least 24 hours before being cremated. Also, the deceased must be inside a casket or other durable container, such as a pressed wood or cardboard box, while the cremation takes place.

"The cremation of animals or pets of any type is strictly prohibited in a crematory facility designed for cremation of human remains," said Ramlo, adding, "there is a special manufactured animal/pet retort that might be added in the future should the demand require."

The Hagler-Anderson Mortuary is locally owned and independent, meaning they are not part of a national chain. The company's centrally located Logan Street funeral home will remain open with room for larger services.

For more information, visit or write to Anderson Cremation Services, 2807 Bozeman Ave., Helena, MT 59601; or call 442-8520.