

Cemetery Records

Wisconsin Municipal Records Schedule

This section covers record series that are generally grouped under Cemetery Records. The schedule identifies records created by most municipalities and is applicable to all records regardless of format or media.

Municipalities must adopt this schedule or have an ordinance in place before it can be used to manage their records. Please read the Introduction section of the WMRS before applying ANY section of the schedule to your records.

To simplify the recordkeeping process for municipalities, the Wisconsin Historical Society has included a field identifying if notification is required before record series may be destroyed.

- Records identified as Waived means that the Wisconsin Historical Society has determined the record series to have low historical value and waived the notification period as indicated Wis. Stat. § 19.21(4)(a). Municipalities are free to destroy any waived records once they reach their required retention period.
- Records designated Notify require you send written notification to the WHS before destruction. Details about the notification process are available on the [Wisconsin Historical Society website](#).

Note: Notification should be given on any records 75 years or older regardless if they are marked waived.

Requirements Specific to Cemetery Records

Municipalities and towns are required to assume ownership of abandoned private cemeteries. Cemeteries are considered abandoned if the cemetery association or other organization that once cared for the cemetery no longer exists and no legal owner can be found (Wis. Stat. § 157.115(1)).

- The municipality or town must care for the cemetery to the same standards as other municipal or town cemeteries.
- Six or more residents of your town or municipality may petition the circuit court to require that the town or municipality assume ownership or move any graves to another location.

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention and Disposition	Confidential	WHS Notification
Annual Report and Documentation	Includes the annual report to the cemetery board and the records needed to prepare the report. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 157.62(4).	Permanent	No	N/A
Care Funds	An accounting of amounts deposited in, amounts withdrawn from, other income accruing to, and the balance at the end of the reporting period of care funds of the cemetery, including the funds in Wis. Stat. § 157.11(9g)(a), Wis. Stat. § 157.12(3), and Wis. Stat. § 157.125. Including records that show, for each deposit, the name of the purchaser or beneficiary of the contract relating to the deposit and the item purchased. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 157.62(4).	Permanent	Yes Confidential per Wis. Stat. § 157.62(2)(c)	N/A
Contract for Sale	Copy of each contract for the sale of a cemetery lot, mausoleum space, or cemetery merchandise. Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 157.62(4).	Event=3 years; Event=After all of the obligations of the contract have been fulfilled	No	Waive
Grave Registration Records	Records that describe who is buried, the date of death, interment and location of the remains.	Permanent	No	N/A

Record Series Title	Series Description	Retention and Disposition	Confidential	WHS Notification
Preneed Trust Funds	<p>An accounting of amounts deposited in, amounts withdrawn from, income accruing to, and the balance at the close of the reporting period of any preneed trust funds of the cemetery. Including records that show, for each deposit, the name of the purchaser or beneficiary of the contract relating to the deposit and the item purchased.</p> <p>Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 157.62(4).</p>	<p>Event+15 years; Event=Date of the deposit or withdrawal</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Confidential per Wis. Stat. § 157.62(2)(c)</p>	<p>Waive</p>
Reburial of Human Remains	<p>Includes records confirming an attempt to notify individuals specified in Wis. Stat. 157.112(3)(b)1.-4. when none of the individuals specified are available.</p> <p>Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 157.112(3m).</p>	<p>Permanent</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>N/A</p>
Report for Final Disposition	<p>Report for final disposition completed by the funeral director or other person preparing the body for burial or other final disposition. The reports are filed with the local register, but may also be filed with the cemetery to serve as a record of interment.</p> <p>Authority provided by Wis. Stat. § 135.06(1)(a)(1).</p>	<p>Permanent</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>N/A</p>