

**Cremation Association of North America**  
**Statement on Alkaline Hydrolysis**  
**Adopted by the board of directors on February 8, 2013**

**Background**

The Cremation Association of North America (CANA) defines cremation in the following manner: A suggested definition of cremation is the: *"The mechanical and/or thermal or other dissolution process that reduces human remains to bone fragments."* Cremation includes the processing and usually includes the pulverization of the bone fragments.

This definition covers a variety of technologies that may be applied in order to achieve reduction to bone fragments, including traditional flame-based cremation, calcination and alkaline hydrolysis.

Alkaline hydrolysis is a water-based dissolution process for human remains that uses alkaline chemicals, heat, and sometimes agitation and/or pressure, to accelerate natural decomposition. Human remains are placed in a chamber with an alkaline chemical and water mixture and may be subjected to heat, pressure and/or agitation. Depending upon the equipment and the temperature employed, the process may take two to twelve hours, leaving a bone residue and a liquid. The liquid is considered a wastewater, which is discharged with the permission of the local wastewater treatment authority and in accordance with federal, state, provincial and local laws.

**Suggested Guidelines**

When considering legislation or regulation concerning alkaline hydrolysis, it is important to understand that current cremation laws and regulations may be sufficient to address matters including, but not limited to transportation, storage, identification, authorization or disposition. Differences may lie in the equipment used and the technological processes. CANA outlines three guidelines for consideration in new and revised regulation and legislation:

- For the regulation of the alkaline hydrolysis equipment and technology, CANA defers to authorities such as the United States Centers for Disease Control and American Society of Mechanical Engineers to set standards.
- State and provincial regulatory authorities that govern cremation providers should be authorized to regulate and license alkaline hydrolysis providers. Additionally state, provincial and other municipal authorities that will govern alkaline hydrolysis will need to participate in the development and enforcement of regulations.
- The end product from the various cremation processes is similar in physical appearance thus encouraging the perception among the public that the technologies are the same. CANA encourages the disclosure on authorization forms and/or death certificates as to which technology is being used.