

Tips From The Top

[advice from experts]

10 TIPS

For a Perfect Prep Room

In order to be at the top of your game, having a prep room that's in excellent shape is key. Duncan Todd, president of Duncan Stuart Todd in Boulder, Colo., offers some helpful pointers for making your prep room perfect.

1. GET CURRENT.

Get current with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration codes, safety, sanitation, design and equipment. If your prep room is more than 20 years old, it's probably time to think about renovating.

2. BE REALISTIC ABOUT COST.

Be aware that a prep room must be code compliant and operationally capable. These regulatory and functional needs result in about 95 percent of the prep room components and directly dictate the cost. The key to a successful project with a practical return on investment is finding the right balance between cost and durability or startup cost versus life cycle cost. The payback for a properly designed and equipped room has a direct relationship to the business case load.

3. FOLLOW A MASTER PLAN.

Start with a master plan prepared by a qualified professional who has direct and current experience in all aspects of a modern OSHA compliant preparation room. It is advisable that the funeral home project engage a specialist in preparation room design to ensure that

everything is properly accounted for. Construction is often stressful on owners and when you have confidence in your plan, you will sleep better at night.

4. PROVIDE SAFE AIR.

Protect yourself and your staff with proper ventilation in the prep room. We cannot overemphasize this requirement. Proper execution of OSHA standards must govern any prep room layout. An ideal installation is an integrated HVAC system with energy recovery features that are useable in formaldehyde contaminated applications. A National Funeral Directors Association study recommends including a localized exhaust ventilation device in addition to the whole room system.

5. CONSIDER WORKFLOW.

Start at the beginning with load in. In addition to addressing the central functions of the room, an employee changing room is required by OSHA. We also advise a dressing room, plus toilet facilities for the embalmer located adjacent to the prep room. Don't forget hanging space for employee clothing and a place for the decedent's burial clothing. Be sure

your cabinets are designed with a place for instruments, supplies and hazardous waste.

6. CHOOSE MODERN EQUIPMENT.

Select foot-end and related equipment that is reliable, efficient and easy to maintain. Body coolers, re-torts, body lifts, embalming machines and tables must all be factored into the project cost.

7. THINK SAFETY.

Take care to provide code required safety equipment such as an overhead shower and eye wash. Other plumbing safeguards and factors involving the entire funeral home must be addressed. These factors would include the necessity to prevent backflow issues and the requirement to separate prep room ventilation from public areas of the facility.

8. CONSIDER YOUR ENVIRONMENT.

Create a comfortable environment by selecting pleasing colors for countertops and cabinet finishes. We advise wall protection and medical flooring.

9. CHOOSE A CONTRACTOR CAREFULLY.

Research contractors in your area and ask for references. It is essential that the contractor have a reputation for following plans as installation procedures are critical for prep room equipment. Particularly in small communities, contractors seldom have an opportunity to gain experience in the specialized type of construction and installation of prep room products.

10. ENJOY YOUR WORKPLACE.

After all, you spend a lot of time in the prep room. Shouldn't it be a place where you can work safely, efficiently and comfortably? •