


# Customer Segment Story: FUNERAL HOMES

A true testimonial brought to you by **FireKing** 

Many funeral homes are small, family-owned operations that have been in business for many generations. Given those circumstances, even the most modest of facilities can house a wealth of documents, certificates, and local genealogical history that is irreplaceable in the event of a disaster. With historical records, the family funeral home often acts as a repository for the last surviving documents that relate to ancestral loved ones.

In the context of business operations, another type of documentation that is categorized as vital deals with prearranged services, since many customers will set out their wishes years in advance. This type of document is crucial to funeral home companies that are responsible for carrying out a deceased customer's last wishes. According to trends published by the National Funeral Director's Association, "There has been a dramatic increase in the number of individuals choosing to preplan their own funeral. This trend can be credited to the aging baby boomers, who are known for their desire to control all aspects of their life and for developing their own ideas. These traits are now beginning to impact funeral service."

In addition, funeral homes are required to maintain documentation of price lists. The Federal Trade Commission Rule on Funeral Practices states:

*To prevent the unfair or deceptive acts or practices specified in 453.2 and 453.3 of this rule, funeral providers must retain and make available for inspection by Commission officials true and accurate copies of the price lists specified in 453.2(b) (2) through (4), as applicable, for at least one year after the date of their last distribution to customers, and a copy of each statement of funeral goods and services selected, as required by 453.2(b) (5) for at least one year from the date on which the statement was signed.*

All funeral businesses need a set of clear vital records protection policies and procedures. Whether the records are in digital form (disk, tape) or on paper, they must be stored in a secure, fire-protected location, in a fire resistant file or vault. Standard metal filing equipment is believed to offer fire protection by a large majority of funeral home owners and operators. It can be tempting to not question this assumption because standard metal filing cabinets and lock boxes are considerably cheaper than fire resistant files and vaults. The bottom line is, price should not be an overriding factor when the issue is protecting vital records

and documents. It is imperative to seek products that are tested by Underwriters' Laboratories (UL®) or other nationally known independent testing labs. Avoid equipment with manufacturers' or non-independent ratings. UL, in particular, is the best, as no other testing and standards organization matches their reputation.

One "trick" to be wary of is a product that claims to be "built to" a certain UL class specification. This is marketing-driven wordplay pure and simple and it leads the customer to falsely believe they are getting a UL rating, but in reality it's just the manufacturer's dubious claim. If UL has never tested it, how it will stand up to a real fire is anyone's guess.

You won't have to sacrifice aesthetics for safety either. The top vendors in the industry offer well-designed, attractive media rated safes, fire resistant file cabinets and fire safes for on-site records protection. You can readily find this equipment at your local office products dealer or via any office products catalog.

According to the owner of McSpadden Funeral Home in Ellington, Missouri, many people in the funeral home industry use FireKing® fireproof file cabinets to maintain their important documents. "We mainly use our FireKing cabinet to store the prearranged funeral contracts," says McSpadden.

"I would recommend FireKing fireproof file cabinets to anyone in the industry," says Jay Boulanger, owner of Spengel-Boulanger Funeral Home in Highland, Illinois.

Often, purchasing decisions are determined not only by funeral home owners, but also by pre-need administrators and funeral home managers. "A large part of our business is prearranged services, and the files include financial documents as well as a customer's final wishes. Sometimes we need to keep these records on file for years," says the manager of Sunset Funeral Homes in El Paso, Texas. "I think the practice of using fireproof safes is a standard in the industry." Family-owned and operated since its establishment in 1989, Sunset Funeral Homes has been memorializing the death of loved ones for 15 years, and uses FireKing fireproof file cabinets to protect their customers.

Funeral homes have dealt with the storage of irreplaceable items for generations. Every funeral home has some number of documents that are unique or special that they need to keep extremely secure. The problem is not simple for these institutions, considering that they need to secure documents as varied as prearranged plans to death certificates. Funeral homes need a solution that is both secure and available. Fireproof cabinets, vaults, and safes from FireKing are an excellent step towards ensuring a community's records and historical documents are properly protected.