

## Cremation is popular, but is it green?

Lauren Markoe Religion News Service | Jan. 23, 2014 Eco Catholic

Cremation is forbidden in traditional Islam and Judaism but accepted by most other religions. It is also the [fastest-growing](#) [1] way Americans choose to deal with their bodies after death.

But does it hurt the environment?

The Cremation Association of North America predicts that [44 percent of American deaths will result in cremation by 2015](#) [2]. Many Americans, religious or otherwise, are under the impression that cremation is a prime environmental option -- it takes up less land and avoids the danger of groundwater contamination seeping from embalming chemicals in the body.

[See also: [?Green burials reflect a shift to care for the body and soul](#) [3]?; [?Lay your loved ones to rest the natural way](#) [4]?; [?Green burials offer ecological, ancient way to say goodbye to loved ones](#) [5]?]

But the cremation society does not promote it as a green option. Green burial advocates note the tremendous energy expended by crematoriums, the pollutants released into the atmosphere from the mercury and other metals found in tooth fillings and surgical implants, and the fact that cremated bodies are often embalmed beforehand.

As the [Green Burial Council](#) [6] concludes: "Cremation uses far fewer resources than almost any other disposition option, but it certainly has an environmental impact."

But cremation options billed as more environmentally-friendly are emerging: bio-cremation, for example. Also known as resomation or [alkaline hydrolysis](#) [7], bio-cremation dissolves the body in a process that involves pressure, an alkali solution, and heating at much lower temperatures than necessary in crematoria. Metals are separated from body tissues, and can be disposed of properly instead of burned.

It's legal in only eight states -- Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota and Oregon -- and some have [questioned](#) [8] how green it really is.

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### Links:

[1] <http://www.nbcnews.com/business/cremation-hottest-trend-funeral-industry-1B8068228>

[2] <http://www.cremationassociation.org/?page=IndustryStatistics>

[3] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/green-burials-reflect-shift-care-body-and-soul>

[4] <http://ncronline.org/news/lay-your-loved-ones-rest-natural-way>

[5] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/green-burials-offer-ecological-ancient-way-say-goodbye-loved-ones>

[6] <http://www.greenburialcouncil.org/>

[7] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alkaline\\_hydrolysis\\_\(death\\_custom\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alkaline_hydrolysis_(death_custom))

[8] <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/feb/13/local/la-me-cremation-20110214>