

Authorities: Woman sent to Iowa funeral home was alive

February 3 2023, by Margaret Stafford



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A continuing care home in suburban Des Moines, Iowa, has been fined \$10,000 after a funeral home discovered a woman sent to it in a body bag was still alive.

The Iowa Department of Inspection and Appeals said in a report filed Wednesday that the 66-year-old [woman](#) was declared dead at the Glen Oaks Alzheimer's Special Care Center in Urbandale on Jan. 3.

The woman, whose name has not been released, had [early onset dementia](#), anxiety and depression and had been in hospice care since Dec. 28.

She was placed in a zipped body bag and taken to the Ankeny Funeral Home & Crematory, where workers found that she was breathing and called 911, the report said.

She was taken to Mercy West Lakes Hospital, where she was breathing but unresponsive. The woman was ultimately returned to [hospice care](#), where she died on Jan. 5 with her family by her side, according to the report.

A Glen Oaks staff member who had worked a 12-hour shift and was on the team caring for the woman told investigators she first reported to a nurse practitioner early Jan. 3 that the woman was not breathing and had no pulse.

The nurse practitioner who had cared for the woman throughout the night also was unable to find a pulse and said the woman was not breathing. She continued to assess the woman for about five minutes before determining the woman had died.

The woman was declared dead about 6:30 a.m., roughly 90 minutes after the staff member's first report. A funeral home employee and a second [nurse practitioner](#) who put the woman into the body bag and the funeral home's vehicle about an hour later also found no [signs of life](#), according to the [report](#).

The department of inspections and appeals found the care center "failed to provide adequate direction to ensure appropriate cares and services were provided" before the woman was declared dead.

Lisa Eastman, executive director of the Glen Oaks Alzheimer's Special Care Center, said in a statement that the center cares deeply about its residents and remains committed to supporting end-of-life care.

"All of our employees are given regular training in how best to support [end-of-life care](#) and the death transition for our residents," Eastman said.

The Ankeny police department is not pursuing criminal charges, spokesperson Sgt. Corey Schneden told The Des Moines Register.

The Iowa Capital Dispatch reported in February 2022 that Glen Oaks had been fined \$500 for failing to perform the required background checks on employees. It found five workers had not received the required training to work in a memory-care facility.

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