

523I.316 Protection of cemeteries and burial sites.

1. *Existence of cemetery or burial site — notification.* If a governmental subdivision is notified of the existence of a cemetery, or a marked burial site that is not located in a dedicated cemetery, within its jurisdiction and the cemetery or burial site is not otherwise provided for under [this chapter](#), the governmental subdivision shall, as soon as is practicable, notify the owner of the land upon which the cemetery or burial site is located of the cemetery's or burial site's existence and location. The notification shall include an explanation of the provisions of [this section](#). If there is a basis to believe that interment may have occurred more than one hundred fifty years earlier, the governmental subdivision shall also notify the state archaeologist.

2. *Disturbance of interment spaces — penalty.* A person who knowingly and without authorization damages, defaces, destroys, or otherwise disturbs an interment space commits criminal mischief in the third degree under [section 716.5](#). Criminal mischief in the third degree is an aggravated misdemeanor.

3. *Duty to preserve and protect.*

a. A governmental subdivision having a cemetery, or a burial site that is not located within a dedicated cemetery, within its jurisdiction, for which preservation is not otherwise provided, shall preserve and protect the cemetery or burial site as necessary to restore or maintain its physical integrity as a cemetery or burial site. The governmental subdivision may enter into a written agreement to delegate the responsibility for the preservation and protection of the cemetery or burial site to the owner of the property on which the cemetery or burial site is located or to a public or private organization interested in historical preservation. The governmental subdivision shall not enter into an agreement with a public or private organization to preserve and protect the cemetery or burial site unless the property owner has been offered the opportunity to enter into such an agreement and has declined to do so.

b. A governmental subdivision is authorized to expend public funds, in any manner authorized by law, in connection with such a cemetery or burial site.

c. If a governmental subdivision proposes to enter into an agreement with a public or private organization pursuant to [this subsection](#) to preserve and protect a cemetery or burial site that is located on property owned by another person within the jurisdiction of the governmental subdivision, the proposed agreement shall be written, and the governmental subdivision shall provide written notice by ordinary mail of the proposed agreement to the property owner at least fourteen days prior to the date of the meeting at which such proposed agreement will be authorized. The notice shall include the location of the cemetery or burial site and a copy of the proposed agreement, and explain that the property owner is required to permit members of the public or private organization reasonable ingress and egress for the purposes of preserving and protecting the cemetery or burial site pursuant to the proposed agreement. The notice shall also include the date, time, and place of the meeting and a statement that the property owner has a right to attend the meeting and to comment regarding the proposed agreement.

d. (1) Subject to [chapter 670](#), a governmental subdivision that enters into an agreement with a public or private organization pursuant to [this subsection](#) is liable for any personal injury or property damage that occurs in connection with the preservation or protection of the cemetery or burial site or access to the cemetery or burial site by the governmental subdivision or the public or private organization.

(2) For the purposes of this paragraph, "liable" means liability for every civil wrong which results in wrongful death or injury to a person or injury to property or injury to personal or property rights and includes but is not restricted to actions based upon negligence; error or omission; nuisance; breach of duty, whether statutory or other duty; or denial or impairment of any right under any constitutional provision, statute, or rule of law.

e. A property owner who is required to permit members of a public or private organization reasonable ingress and egress for the purpose of preserving or protecting a cemetery or burial site on that owner's property and who acts in good faith and in a reasonable manner pursuant to [this subsection](#) is not liable for any personal injury or property damage that occurs in connection with the preservation or protection of the cemetery or burial site or access to the cemetery or burial site.

f. For the purposes of [this subsection](#), reasonable ingress and egress to a cemetery or burial site shall include the following:

(1) A member of a public or private organization that has entered into a written agreement with the governmental subdivision who desires to visit such a cemetery or burial site shall give the property owner at least ten days' written notice of the intended visit.

(2) If the property owner cannot provide reasonable access to the cemetery or burial site on the desired date, the property owner shall provide reasonable alternative dates when the property owner can provide access to the member.

(3) A property owner is not required to make any improvements to that person's property to satisfy the requirement to provide reasonable access to a cemetery or burial site pursuant to [this subsection](#).

4. *Confiscation and return of memorials.* A law enforcement officer having reason to believe that a memorial or memorialization is in the possession of a person without authorization or right to possess the memorial or memorialization may take possession of the memorial or memorialization from that person and turn it over to the officer's law enforcement agency. If a law enforcement agency determines that a memorial or memorialization the agency has taken possession of rightfully belongs on an interment space, the agency shall return the memorial or memorialization to the interment space, or make arrangements with the person having jurisdiction over the interment space for its return.

5. *Burial sites located on private property.* If a person notifies a governmental subdivision that a burial site of the person's relative is located on property owned by another person within the jurisdiction of the governmental subdivision, the governmental subdivision shall notify the property owner of the location of the burial site and that the property owner is required to permit the person reasonable ingress and egress for the purposes of visiting the burial site of the person's relative.

6. *Discovery of human remains.* Any person discovering human remains shall notify the county or state medical examiner or a city, county, or state law enforcement agency as soon as is reasonably possible unless the person knows or has good reason to believe that such notice has already been given or the discovery occurs in a cemetery. If there is reason to believe that interment may have occurred more than one hundred fifty years earlier, the governmental subdivision notified shall also notify the state archaeologist. A person who does not provide notice required pursuant to [this subsection](#) commits a serious misdemeanor.

7. *Adverse possession.* A cemetery or a pioneer cemetery is exempt from seizure, appropriation, or acquisition of title under any claim of adverse possession, unless it is shown that all remains in the cemetery or pioneer cemetery have been disinterred and removed to another location.

[2005 Acts, ch 128, §38; 2006 Acts, ch 1117, §123; 2009 Acts, ch 179, §144; 2012 Acts, ch 1023, §157; 2017 Acts, ch 54, §63](#)

Referred to in [§523I.212](#)