

HEADLINES

DENR told: Crematorium not for infectious wastes

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With so many people dying of the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) should reserve the use of crematorium facilities for the disposal of human remains rather than infectious waste, an environment and health watchdog said.

The EcoWaste Coalition has appealed to the DENR to revoke its advisory on alternative modes for the disposal of pathological and infectious COVID-19 health care waste, issued on March 26, which specifically mentions “thermal treatment by incineration” and “use of crematorium” as alternative modes to dispose of pathological and infectious wastes. Such advisory goes against the Clean Air Act and the Code on Sanitation, the group said.

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Highly unacceptable

The inclusion of crematoria as an option for disposing infectious waste was also “highly unacceptable” as these facilities are not designed to incinerate trash, EcoWaste said in its letter to Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu.

“With the continuing rise in the number of persons who have died due to suspected or confirmed COVID-19, it is essential for the crematories to be readily available for the cremation of a victim’s remains,” EcoWaste wrote, adding that their use, other than for burning corpses, may be culturally insensitive and may result in unwarranted delay in cremation procedures.

“We urge the DENR and the [Environmental Management Bureau] to duly consult and collaborate with the Department of Health and other stakeholders on matters affecting public health and the environment,” the group said.

Quarantine facilitiesThe DENR is working to establish proper solid waste disposal and wastewater treatment facilities in designated community quarantines amid the spread of COVID-19, DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda said.

The environment agency is coordinating with the World Trade Center Metro Manila, Rizal Memorial Coliseum and Philippine International Convention Center—three establishments that have been converted into quarantines—to set up proper facilities that would handle medical and health care wastes, he added.

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