

Blue Springs Cemetery says benches must go

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BLUE SPRINGS, Mo. - Staff at the Blue Springs Cemetery are asking family members of deceased loved ones to remove free standing benches from grave sites before June 15 due to issues the benches are causing.

Blue Springs Cemetery Office Manager Dedra Arlint said the benches are getting in the way of lawn crews and leading to delays during maintenance work.

"The mowers can't get around them," she said. "It's hard to weed-eat around them and underneath them."

The benches being removed are often placed near tombstones by family members. Some of the benches have been placed perpendicular to the grave stones, which can force grounds crews to go around the site and cause delays during lawn cutting. Other benches have been placed too close to some tombstones, which Arlint said could damage them or cause a liability issue.

"If one would fall, we don't want anyone getting hurt," she explained.

The Blue Springs Cemetery dates back to 1834. Arlint said the plot is continuing to get crowded, and the benches are not helping the issue.

"We're trying to get everything where it runs smoothly and looks nice," she said. "If people want to come out and sit at the grave, they could bring a blanket or a lawn chair."

Not all benches at the grave yard will be removed. Memorial granite benches with a concrete base will be kept in place if they are in line with other headstones. Benches that are part of a larger memorial or serve as the tombstone will also be able to stay.

However, several memorial benches that run perpendicular to the tomb rows will have

to be resituated so they are in line.

Kevin Frisbie, who runs Frisbie Monuments in Blue Springs, is not happy with the request from the cemetery. Frisbie made some of the benches that may have to be moved, and he said families may have a tough time seeing changes to hallowed ground.

"Families go [to the cemetery] to grieve their loved ones," he explained. "When they're going to go there and find benches gone, they're going to be upset."

Frisbie also questioned the legality of the decision from Blue Springs Cemetery to remove the benches.

"I don't believe the cemetery really has a right to go up and take them off someone else's piece of real estate," Frisbie explained. "Plus, the benches don't belong to the cemetery, they belong to the families."

Families have until June 15 to remove the benches from the grave sites. Blue Springs Cemetery says families have been notified through public notices about the deadline. Staff have also put notifications on the impacted benches around the cemetery.

If a family does not remove the bench in time, cemetery staff will do it themselves.

"We'll have to take them out," said Arlint. "If we see them put up without permission we'll take them out."

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