



Grave subsidence and top ups

What is grave subsidence?

Grave subsidence refers to the appearance of graves 'sinking'. This is an entirely natural process caused by loosened soil settling into place. Grave subsidence is a process that MCK manages and rectifies, and it should not be a cause for concern.

What causes grave subsidence?

When graves are dug, the dirt removed is lumpy and irregular, particularly when it has high clay content, which is the case in many MCK CT cemeteries.

Backfilling (the process of using excavated dirt to fill a grave) will create small air pockets in the loosened soil beneath the ground's surface. Over time, a backfilled grave will appear to 'sink', although this is just the process of the air escaping and the loosened dirt settling into place.

The amount and rate of sinkage will depend on a range of factors, such as:

- Soil type
- Grave location
- Depth of excavation
- Amount of rainfall
- Groundwater levels

Heavy and prolonged rainfall in particular will contribute to grave subsidence.

Topping up subsided graves

MCK staff undertake regular checks of recently backfilled graves, as well as monitoring graves after periods of rainfall. After identifying which graves need top ups, staff will schedule time to carry out these works. Subsided graves can be topped up by MCK staff until the soil has compacted naturally.

Depending on the aforementioned factors, a grave may need to be topped up on several occasions over an extended period of time. Weather and climate permitting, dirt can take years to settle.

MCK does not use machinery to compact the soil as this could damage coffins.