



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Agreement Suspends Rhonert Park's Abby Mortuary Indefinitely

Decision Will Help Protect Consumers from Further Harm as State Prepares its Case

SACRAMENTO – An Interim Suspension Order against a Rhonert Park funeral director's professional licenses will remain in effect indefinitely according to an agreement between the licensee and the California Department of Consumer Affairs' Cemetery and Funeral Bureau.

The agreement means Anthony James Villeggiante, owner of Abby Chapel of the Redwoods Mortuary, cannot operate the business or work as a funeral director until the underlying issues that led to the Interim Suspension Order are resolved.

"We're pleased with the agreement in that it helps to protect consumers from further harm, which is our biggest concern," said Bureau Chief Sherrie Moffet-Bell. The agreement went into effect May 14, following a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge.

The Bureau filed the original petition in March 2007 asking for the Interim Suspension Order against Mr. Villaggiante's funeral director's license, as well as the license of his business, the Abby Chapel of the Redwoods Mortuary, after a dozen improperly refrigerated bodies were found by state inspectors in an unauthorized storage facility.

Cemetery and Funeral Bureau officials contacted the families of the deceased and helped arrange for the proper care and ultimate disposal of the bodies.

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In a related action, the City of Rohnert Park won an injunction in Sonoma County Superior Court against the mortuary, which prohibited it from operating in the city. The state's action takes the additional step of preventing Villeggiante from working as a funeral director anywhere in California.

In the agreement, Villaggiante also waived the statutory 14-day time limit for the state to file its case against Villaggiante with the Office of Administrative Hearings, the state agency with jurisdiction over professional licensing disputes.

DCA's Cemetery and Funeral Bureau licenses and regulates the California funeral and cemetery industries. It also investigates complaints against funeral homes, crematories, state-licensed cemeteries and individual licensees. For more information, visit www.cfb.ca.gov.

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