

## Why do headstones go out of level?

One of the main reasons a headstone “sinks” or goes out of level is due to the ground it stands on as well as the age of the cemetery.

Older cemeteries often have hundreds of graves excavated and often times there was insufficient time allowed for the ground to settle prior to installing the headstone.

Once a headstone is installed, the grave must be allowed to settle for a time before the headstone can be releveled. This can take up to a year in some instances depending on the soil conditions, weather and the weight of the headstone as some can weigh 100 pounds or more.

The foundation is a platform on which to build a memorial. It must be strong enough to bear the weight of the structure and large enough to keep it stable. All foundations must be larger than the area of the memorial and set on piers approximately 24” deep and 6” in width on the outer end of the foundation.

All ground moves, but the main reason headstones “sink” or go out of level is the coffin. Without the use of a vault, the coffin gradually collapses and the ground sinks.

Not allowing the back-filled ground sufficient time to settle prior to installing a headstone contributes to the headstone going out of level.

### **So what can I do?**

We recommend using a vault when interring a deceased loved one. The use of a vault helps to mitigate the effect of the ground settling resulting in a more stable base for the headstone.

There are many reputable installers in the area that ensure the installation of markers meet industry guidelines and standards. The following is an example of how ground headstones are installed:

- Ensure there is a minimum of 1” on each side of the marker
- Excavation of the base should be a minimum of 8”-10” in depth
- Holes for the piers should be approximately 24” deep and 6” wide on the outer ends of the pad (if there is a vase, the pier holes should be placed towards the bottom of the pad)
- Two (2) reinforced steel bars (piers) are placed in each hole and set deep enough that only 3” of the bar rise above the surface
- Steel mesh is placed at the bottom and tied to the steel bars with metal ties
- Concrete is poured leaving enough space for the grave marker to set flush approximately 4” from the top
- The headstone is installed on top of this foundation

*The key to this type of installation are the piers as they help to stabilize the base on which the headstone will be placed.*

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CONTACT THE BEREAVEMENT AUTHORITY OF ONTARIO**

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