

Colorado Funeral Homeowner Sentenced to 20 Years for Hiding 191 Bodies and Defrauding Families

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— Categories: Crime



A funeral home owner in Colorado has been sentenced to 20 years in prison after authorities discovered he had hidden 191 dead bodies while lying to families and stealing federal relief funds.

Jon Hallford, 43, ran the Return to Nature Funeral Home in Penrose, about 100 miles south of Denver. Instead of cremating or burying the deceased as promised, he left their bodies to

decay for years inside the building.

U.S. District Judge Nina Wang handed down the sentence on Friday, calling the case “cruelty and deception on an unimaginable scale.”

“This is not an ordinary fraud case,” Judge Wang said.

The investigation began in 2023 when neighbors reported a strong, foul smell coming from the funeral home. When federal agents entered the property, they were shocked to find bodies stacked floor to ceiling. In some rooms, the remains were piled so high that investigators had to lay boards across pools of bodily fluids just to move around safely.

Hallford had charged grieving families more than \$130,000 for funeral services that were never performed. Instead of ashes, many families received urns filled with dry concrete mix.

Prosecutors also said that Hallford and his wife, Carie Hallford, defrauded the government out of nearly \$900,000 in COVID-19 relief money by filing fake loan applications. Rather than using the funds to support their business, they spent it on luxury SUVs, cryptocurrency, and expensive purchases from Gucci and Tiffany & Co.

“I opened this business to help people,” Hallford told the court. “Then everything spiraled out of control. I am so deeply sorry.”

While some families cried during his apology, others expressed anger and disbelief.

In addition to the prison term, Hallford was ordered to repay over \$1 million in restitution to victims and the government. He also faces state charges for 191 counts of corpse abuse and is scheduled to be sentenced for those crimes in August.

Carie Hallford is awaiting trial later this year on similar charges.

Colorado authorities have permanently shut down the funeral home and are working to identify the remains through DNA testing so families can finally bring their loved ones home.

“The betrayal here is nearly impossible to comprehend,” Judge Wang said. “This sentence reflects the serious harm caused to so many.”