

This article was written approximately 15 years ago describing what it takes for our ground crew to thaw out the ground to dig a grave in freezing weather. It is also an explanation of why the cemetery has to charge an additional fee in this situation.

Once the ground is frozen, using the described equipment below, it takes 8-10 hours to thaw the ground and sometimes longer. A hundred gallon propane tank is used to supply the flame that heats the ground. Last year, propane cost us \$3-4 per gallon which cost us just in propane \$300-\$400 to fill tank. Fortunately, this year (2015) the cost of propane is about \$2.40 per gallon costing us approximately \$240 to fill propane tank. In addition to the cost of propane, the defroster/heater has to be installed and later removed from over the grave site which take two men to handle it. The defroster/heater has to be monitored by staff to avoid an accident; therefore there are extra labor cost involved.

The cemetery is currently charging an additional fee of \$150 for thawing the ground when applicable for a burial in freezing temperatures. The current fee doesn't even cover the cost of the propane nevertheless the additional man hours required. In the future, this charge may have to be increased.

## Cold temperatures posing problems for area cemeteries

By KATHY HAND  
Call Staff Writer

COVINGTON—How do you do it?

As frigid temperatures linger on, that question is posed more and more often of people who work outside.

Sometimes the querist really is asking how the worker copes with the situation day after day, when the thermometer doesn't rise much above the teens. Sometimes he wonders how a certain task is performed in weather of that nature.

Backhoes and jackhammers just aren't the solutions for digging graves now that the

ground is frozen to 24 inches, noted Darryl Lambroff, owner of Miami Memorial Park, north of Covington.

Graves there are defrosted first with a grave defroster. Lambroff said the defroster has been used for 22 funerals since the week before Christmas. He said graves dug with other equipment would require about three days notice, and he would have to expose his men to weather conditions he wouldn't want to expose them to.

With the defroster which consists of a propane tank and torch which runs into an in-

sulated hood, it takes about eight hours to thaw out a grave site.

At this point the ground freezes just as fast as you dig it," Lambroff observed. He has had the defroster for three years, but never had to use it until this year. He noted, "We have not had a thaw since the week before Christmas. Normally we get an intermediate thaw."

He said a 100 pound tank of propane is used for each grave. "We use \$25 to \$30 worth of propane per grave. In manhours it would cost \$50 to \$60," he said.



GARY ROBINSON, Miami Memorial Park superintendent, stands by the defroster used to thaw grave sites.