

50 Decomposing Bodies Found: Illinois Comptroller Condemns South Chicago Chapel Discovery

by Staff Report
August 7 2026 10:39 AM



CHICAGO - More than 50 decomposing bodies were found Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026, at South Chicago Chapel on the South Side of Chicago, prompting a hazardous materials response as officials worked to identify the remains and notify relatives, authorities said.

The discovery drew a sharp response from Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza, whose office said it is familiar with the funeral home's operators, Johanna and Clark Morgan, because of past practices at another business they ran, Heights Crematory in Chicago Heights.

"Horrificed. Again," Mendoza said in a statement. "The discovery of decomposing remains waiting to be laid to rest this week at a South Side funeral home is heartbreaking and an abomination. These are people — someone's mother, father, sister, brother, child or friend, and they deserve better."

The Cook County Medical Examiner's Office said it was notified by state and local officials that bodies were being stored improperly at South Chicago Chapel. Investigators and forensic pathologists were dispatched, and officials said the remains were in various states of decomposition.

"Staff is assessing the conditions of the remains, searching for documentation regarding identification of the decedents as well as death certificates. This process could take several days to ensure proper disposition," the medical examiner's office said in a statement.

Illinois state officials suspended the license of one of the funeral home's directors, alleging bodies were being kept in an unrefrigerated area in "deplorable conditions." Officials also said the owners previously operated Heights Crematory, which was shut down after improperly stored bodies were found there.

Mendoza said at-need funeral homes such as South Chicago Chapel are not under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Office of Comptroller. The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation handles the physical operations and professional credentials of funeral homes, licenses and disciplines funeral directors and embalmers, and investigates issues including professional incompetence, vital records noncompliance and improper handling of human remains.

Last year, the comptroller's office permanently shut down Heights Crematory after the discovery of several improperly stored bodies and hundreds of cremated remains that had never been returned to families, Mendoza said. Many of the bodies were stacked on top of each other, not refrigerated and partially exposed, while cremations were delayed and record keeping was "abysmal," she said.

"To hear these same operators are doing the same thing again at South Chicago Chapel Funeral Home is infuriating," Mendoza said.

Mendoza said the situation at Heights led her office to spearhead legislation giving the comptroller's office more investigative authority over crematories. The law authorizes the office to summarily suspend a crematory license immediately without a prior hearing in extreme cases, allows immediate inspection of premises and records after a complaint, and raises maximum penalties to \$10,000 per violation. The measure was signed into law this summer and takes effect Jan. 1, 2027.

“Losing someone is unimaginable, but to lose someone and then live in fear that their remains are treated with anything less than the utmost respect and dignity is unconscionable and beyond any scope of human decency,” Mendoza said. “I am hopeful that the Morgans are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.”

The Chicago Police Department asked that inquiries or tips be directed to the Area 2 Detective Division at 312-747-8721.