

# Baby boomer deaths could fuel funeral industry

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Beyond the convention center filled with glistening hearses, beyond the rows of perfectly arranged caskets and bottles of embalming fluid, funeral directors await perhaps their greatest windfall ever: The death of the baby boom generation.

For thousands of professionals gathered here at the National Funeral Directors Association con-

vention, the current economic slump does nothing to dampen longer-term hopes pinned to the projected rise of the U.S. death rate as the cohort born between 1946 and 1964 passes away.

Though dipping slightly over the last several years, and expected to be stagnant for several more, the death rate of about 8.1 per 1,000 people is expected to inch significantly upward sometime in the next decade and eventually go as



Cadillac hearses are on display Tuesday at the National Funeral Directors Association Convention and Expo in Orlando, Fla.

AP PHOTO

high as 10.9. The exact dates are tough to pinpoint because of the size of the generation and medical advances.

Experts say the mortality rate is the greatest single predictor of the industry's business, estimated at about \$11 billion annual-

ly at funeral homes alone.

"It sounds kind of morbid, but they are looking at boom times," said Tara Olson, the owner of AllPoints Research, a marketing research firm. "They're just sort of waiting for the baby boomers to start dying off."