

## **“International Transportation of Bodies”**

What happens if a family member or friend passes away while abroad? How can their remains be safely returned home? What if you are a small funeral home, and you have a client who has passed away while out of the country? If you or your client wish to have a traditional burial, transporting a body internationally might be best left to professionals.

The shipment of a body internationally can be extremely complicated. Each country and even each airline has different regulations and requirements. For example, the Indian airline Jet Airways India requires that the body be embalmed, but other airlines do not require the body to have been embalmed as long as the container is hermetically sealed.

An international funeral shipping company will be familiar with all these rules and regulations, will collect the body of the deceased, ensure that the correct preparations for transportation are made, handle all the legalities and paperwork, book the correct plane flight, and arrange delivery to a funeral home.

If the shipping company will handle most of the process, what does the family member or friend responsible for the body need to do? The first step would be to find a suitable company to take care of the transportation. The website for the American Association of Mortuary Shippers contains a helpful list of such companies.

The family member must then contact the funeral home who will be receiving the body and make all necessary arrangements with them.

After these steps have been completed, depending on the situation, the mortuary shipper will usually embalm the remains; place the body in an appropriate container (<http://www.mcdonaldcontainers.com/combocontainer.php>); collect and complete the necessary documents required for the transportation such as the death certificate, embalming report, proof from the embassy of the deceased's nationality, permit for transportation of the body, and a letter from a physician stating that the deceased did not die from a communicable disease; deliver to the airport and arrange for pick up.

However, if an individual does not wish to go through an international shipping company, they must at least go through a funeral home who offers these services. Most airlines will only allow cargo from designated shippers, and the approval process can be quite extensive. If a small funeral home wishes to be responsible for transportation, it is best to contact the airline's representative to verify that you are adhering to all regulations. Usually the body must be contained in a hermetically sealed container which is then placed inside an airtray (<http://www.mcdonaldcontainers.com/airtray.php>). The shipment must also be accompanied by the correct documentation that is required by both the origin and destination countries. Then, arrangements for the pick up of the body must be made at the destination point. State laws for the transportation of human remains must be adhered to when undertaking this task.

Though, as a small business who does not specialize in the transportation of human remains, undertaking this task on your own is not suggested, certain airlines such as American Airlines have specialists on staff who can answer questions and help with the arrangements directly related to the airline. As far as the required legal documents are concerned, the US State department will be able to work with you or the family on the necessary proceedings.