

“Transporting Human Remains from Mexico to the US”

In the event that a US citizen passes away while living or vacationing in Mexico, a family member or friend of the deceased might contact you as the receiving funeral home. If this is the case, you have the opportunity to greatly assist your clients by walking them through the difficult process of returning their loved one back to the United States.

First, the family member responsible for the body should get in touch with the United States Embassy. The embassy will have a list of Mexican funeral homes that have previously been used by American citizens. This is necessary because the deceased will need to be immediately moved to a funeral home from the hospital or clinic. The US embassy will also help to find and notify next of kin if none were with him or her in Mexico at the time of death. They will be able to give information of Mexico’s legal requirements for cremation, burial, or transportation of human remains. The US Embassy will also prepare a Report of Death of US Citizen Abroad based on the Mexican death certificate and an American passport.

During this time, Mexican authorities might require proof of kinship from the one making all the arrangements for the body. If this person is not related to the deceased, it might be necessary for them to contact the US State Department to receive power of attorney so that the individual can be granted permission and approval to move the body.

As far as documentation goes, the local physician will provide a preliminary death record (Certificado de Defuncion). Then, the civil registry judge will use this record to issue the official death certificate (Acta de Defuncion).

After receiving those documents, the family member can decide what is to be done with the body. Unless special permission has been granted, remains must be buried, cremated, or embalmed within 48 hours of death. If the deceased will be transported back to the United States, Mexico law states that all corpses must first be embalmed.

In order for the body to be successfully exported back to the United States, these are the documents that are required:

1. Official Death Certificate
2. Health Permit issued by the local health authorities
3. Embalming Certificate
4. Transportation information (example: flight itinerary)
5. Information on the final destination of the remains (receiving funeral home)

Upon receiving these documents, the US Embassy will issue the Consular Mortuary Certificate, which will facilitate the entrance of the remains into the United States.

Once all the legal documents are taken care of, the body will need to be placed in a casket that is then encased in a certified container (<http://www.mcdonaldcontainers.com/airtray.php>). The cargo costs vary depending on the point of origin and the final destination, but the cost usually ranges from \$800 to \$1,200.

When dealing with this situation, it is very important that there is close contact between the responsible individual and the State department. They will assist in the necessary proceedings and facilitate the process. For more information, contact the United States Embassy in Mexico City: (01-55) 5080-2000 (calling from Mexico), 011-52-55-5080-2000 (calling from the US) or visit their website: http://mexico.usembassy.gov/eng/citizen_services/death-of-a-citizen.html.