

Funeral Consumers Alliance

August 13, 2019

This is a partial summary of an article entitled: Die\$mart, from the following website <http://diesmart.com/sayinggoodbye/immediately-after-death/#notification>.

Additional Resources: <http://www.finalrights.org> , <http://www.fivewishes.org>.

By: Ann M. Porto, M.S., Psy.D.

This summary is not inclusive of all possible circumstances but is meant to generally assist the reader to understand some of the procedures, forms and regulations involved immediately after the death and just to be aware of when preplanning for your own final wishes.

In addition to the below listed information, at the end of this procedural information, there is a list of some notices to groups and individuals which also need immediate attention.

After finding a person is deceased there are several forms that need to be obtained. Usually this is done with the help of a funeral director but if one is choosing a direct cremation or a home vigil or other alternative it is good to know what is required.

First: A Pronouncement of Death form must be filled out by a medical examiner professional (within 48 hours) before the body can be moved. If there is a question that the death was not of "natural causes", the Coroner's office will be contacted to assess if an autopsy needs to be done.

Second: Transportation arrangements will need to be made to move the body. A permit is required. It is attached to the death certificate and must be given to the cemetery or crematory where disposition takes place.

Arrangements to transport the deceased will need to be made to a mortuary (or within a funeral home), crematory or to the coroner's office. The exception to moving a body is in the case of a home vigil/burial in which case the death doula or funeral director, or after death care professional designated will need to be called to assist with preparations for the body in the home.

Third: a Death Registration form must be completed and filed with the county in which a person died. Either a funeral provider, a coroner or person in charge of a funeral home will complete the form. 1) On the form are the demographics provided by a family member and cause of death, provided by a medical professional or coroner.

A Burial Permit form, at the time of the Death Registration, identifies the type and location of disposition or scattering of ashes information, e.g., where and how the ashes will be scattered. If cremation is the disposition of choice, a Cremation Permit from the medical examiner is required.

Both the Death Registration and the Burial Permit form must be submitted to the *County Recorder in the county which the deceased died for review and approval. These forms must be signed prior to burial. After the disposal, the entity responsible must sign the Burial Permit form and return it to the County Recorder.

Funeral Consumers Alliance

Note: The County Recorder office processing death registrations is named differently in different locations. These include The Dept of Health, The Dept of Vital Statistics, or the Recorder's Office.

After the Death Registration form has been returned to the County Recorder, it will be certified as complete and accurate. This is the same office that a Death Certificate, aka a Certified Death Registration form, is printed on official paper and is stamped with an official seal. This is the form most organizations require as proof of death, e.g., banks, life insurance policy company, etc. Some organizations may accept a photocopy but often they do not and want the original stamped version. That is why often people request at least ten copies to have on hand.

The fee will vary for copies. The executor of the estate will require copies which range between ten to fifteen dollars. Most funeral home directors or crematories can help the designated agent or executor to obtain the original certified death certificates. They usually will bill for these with the funeral costs. Copies of the Death Registration form are kept on file in the County Recorder's office but the time it is kept varies by state. The County Recorder office will send a copy of the approved Death Registration form to the State Department of Vital Statistics where it is stored permanently.

Considerations:

Death occurs at the hospital or hospice facility - someone there will complete the Pronouncement of Death form. They are required by federal law to notify the hospital's organ procurement staff in which case they will talk with the family about donation of organs and tissues. In the event that the deceased has made arrangements to donate their body or tissues to a designated medical institution, contact information to the establishment should be available so the body is either transported by that medical establishment or the responsibility of the family estate.

Death occurs at home - If there is no medical agency or person involved, someone needs to call 911. A Death Doula or the Hospice Agency involved can be sent to the house to complete the Pronouncement of Death form.

Note! If at all possible, if the person deceased has a **DO NOT RESUSCITATE Document** available, it is important to present it to the attending 911 responders. Otherwise, it is common that the responders may resuscitation.

Death occurs at as result of an accident - The deceased may be transported to a hospital or a coroners office and the Pronouncement of Death form is completed there.

Death occurs in a nursing facility-Medical professionals there will complete the form. Nursing staff can arrange for the pickup of the body after notifying next of kin to the family designated funeral establishment.

Death occurs out of state - If a traditional burial service is chosen, the designated agent or a family member will probably be in charge of arranging the transport of the body back to the home. Likely this will require coordination between funeral homes in each city or town. If a body

Funeral Consumers Alliance

is shipped on a common carrier, the body must be embalmed prior to shipping and sealed in an airtight casket or transport container.

Transport costs will vary depending upon the location from place of death to destination, carrier costs and regulations. Boston University will pay for transporting a body in all New England states if the person wished to donate their body to science at the BU Medical school.

In the event of an out of State or Country death - Two other options can also be considered: A funeral and burial in the location of death. In the case of cremation away from home, ashes may be transported home.

If a person had a pre-paid funeral policy, it may be ? (or not) transferable, to the city in which the person died but this depends upon the conditions specified in the policy.

Death occurs out of country - This is the most complicated of all circumstances.

If outside the USA, a relative or designated agent would contact the USA Consulate in the country in which the death occurred to receive assistance making the arrangements for the return of the body or for its disposition in the foreign city. See <http://usembassy.state.gov/>.

The US Dept of State should also be contacted for information and assistance. Certain documents may be required by the US and foreign countries' laws before remains can be transported depending upon the cause of death and circumstances.

A US Consular mortuary certificate - prepared by that office will be required if the body returns to the US.

Another form, an Affidavit of the foreign funeral director - attests that the casket contents are those only of the deceased's body, packing materials and clothing.

The body transmit permit - accompanies the remains to the US and is issued by local health authorities at the embarkation port.

Death is unexpected, or suspicious of unnatural causes - The body may need to be taken to the Coroner's office where an autopsy may be required to examine the body. If an autopsy is to be performed, the state in which the person died may require a next of kin to sign an authorization form. Some counties have funds available for autopsy and transportation others may charge for these services.

For further information about foreign death circumstance and assistance go to: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/abroad/events-and-records/death.html>

Transporting Ashes Out of State or Country:

There are Dept of Transportation (DOT) regulations that must be followed.

Urns that are being transported via air carriers and carry-on luggage must pass through x-ray machines and be screened. Make sure that the urn's construction can be successfully x-rayed, such as wood or non-lead materials. Otherwise, it may not be allowed through the security checkpoint. The security screener will not open the container or urn under any circumstances even if the carrier requests this.

Funeral Consumers Alliance

Additional Important immediate considerations after a person dies:

Arrangements for caring for dependents such as children, pets, and any other things requiring care.

While a public obituary can be helpful, many choose to just have a brief notice directing people to the online information connected to the location of the service. Many are not choosing obituaries due to high cost. In most cases someone in the family or a close friend or neighbor will have to step-up to notify family, friends, employers, priest, pastor, rabbi, or any other significant other spiritual or medical doctors, fraternal and community group(s) affiliated with the deceased.

The estate executor or next of kin, or other designated person close to the deceased, will need to notify, home utilities companies, social security, notify military affiliations, banks/financial groups and other community, fraternal or religious group affiliations.

The Post office will need to know how to forward or stop mail and the police should be notified in the event a home will be left uninhabited for any length of time to prevent theft. A friend, relation or neighbor may be in agreement to monitor the mail in the home computer, the home itself for intruders, caretake the delivered mail, monitoring of phone calls, and to notify medical offices, other appointments made such as hairdressers and other personal care connections as soon as possible. If there is a need for food disposal and plant care, someone appointed may also need to step-up to assist with these types of tasks until the family or designated agent can manage this themselves.

Having the death certificates on hand will also make it easier when it comes time for the estate executor to allocate and transfer funds in the event there is a will and estate and in the event there are probate issues.

Planning ahead makes all this easier especially when the phone numbers, email addresses, pass codes to computers, account numbers and lists of people to call are all in one location.