

Post Death Procedures For Autopsy, Preparation, Casketing and Shipment of Remains [Country]

Peace Corps policy requires that each Country Director (CD), in consultation with the Peace Corps Medical Officer, develops detailed, written, Post-specific procedures to help manage in the event of a Volunteer or Trainee (Volunteer) death. This template provides a framework for Post to survey the local environment and indicates which information must be provided in the *Post Death Procedures* for autopsy, preparation, casketing and shipment of remains.

The contents of the *Post Death Procedures Template* supplements the general procedures described in MS 265 *Death of a Volunteer*. The final procedures for each Post will be determined by the answers to the questions below and by information provided in the U.S. Embassy's Disposition of Remains Report, and in the Post-specific Legal Environment Survey. The procedures should take into account host country laws, regulations, customs, hospitals, mortuary facilities, transportation and other appropriate information.

Each death event will be different and staff will need to be flexible and agile in their interpretation and implementation of MS 265 according to the circumstances of the V/T death.

I. Preparation

- (a) **Review MS 265:** All staff at post who may be involved in leading a response to a V/T death will review MS 265 and be familiar with the *Post Death Procedures* and Attachment C, *Response Action Checklist and Toolkit*.
- (b) **Complete the Template:** Provide information requested below in Sections III to VI.
- (c) **Review and Attach Disposition of Remains:** Obtain the most recent *Disposition of Remains Report* from the U.S. Embassy Consular Section. Attach the report as an addendum to Post Death Procedures. The most recent report can often be found on the embassy web site or from the Consular Section's American Citizen Services.
- (d) **Review and Attach Post-Specific Legal Environment Survey:** Work with the Peace Corps Safety and Security Officer (PCSSO) to ensure this document is appropriately updated.

- (e) **Peace Corps Medical Officer Preparation:** Determine if the Peace Corps Medical Officer is familiar with basic practices in handling remains and with autopsy procedures. If not, the Office of Medical Services can advise the Peace Corps Medical Officer as necessary.
- (f) **Table Top Training Exercise:** The Country Director should lead an annual table top training exercise with Post senior staff to test systems and plans established in these procedures. Table top exercises are available from the Office of Safety and Security.

II. Initial Report of Death

Refer to MS 265 Attachment A *Death of a Volunteer Procedures, 3.0 Notifications and Reports* and Attachment C *Response Action Checklist and Toolkit* for specific notification procedures and requirements.

III. Handling Remains

- (a) **Host-Country Practices and Laws:** Describe host country specific practices or religious practices that may impact the handling of remains. Describe host country laws concerning autopsy. Under what circumstances is an autopsy required? Who may perform the autopsy? Who may attend? What role may the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System play? What role may the Peace Corps Medical Officer play?
- (b) **Back-up Physician(s):** Identify back-up physician(s) to assume the responsibilities of the Peace Corps Medical Officer if unavailable or incapacitated.
- (c) **Materials Availability:** Describe where rubber goods (i.e., gloves, etc.), sheets, and body bags are available [Peace Corps Medical Office, Embassy Consular Section or other source].
- (d) **Refrigeration Facilities:** Refrigeration is the preferred method of preserving the remains before autopsy. Identify facilities to refrigerate the remains pending autopsy prior to embalming. Identify refrigeration sites both in the capital and in outlying areas.
- (e) **In-Country Transportation:** Identify ambulance services of other transportation options for the remains from the scene of the death.
- (f) **Autopsy Availability and Facilities**
 - **Pathologist Availability:** Identify pathologist(s) available in the host country to perform an autopsy.

- **Autopsy Facilities:** Identify where an autopsy would be performed. If autopsy services are substandard or unavailable, comment on the likelihood that post would need to access services from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System (AFMES).

(g) **Embalming and Transport**

- **Transportation and Embalming:** Detail requirements for embalming and transport of remains to another country. Comment on whether remains can be removed from the host country without embalming for an autopsy in a third country.
- **Logistical Support for Transporting Remains:** Describe logistical support or permits required to facilitate embalming and transport.
- **Embalming Facilities:** Identify embalming facilities, if any, that exist in the host country.
 - a. **Mortuary and Hospital Locations:** List locations of local mortuaries/hospitals identifying both private and government-owned.
 - b. **Costs:** Identify costs for embalming.
 - c. **Supplies:** Identify if supplies or equipment needed by a mortician are available and on hand, including preservative chemicals.
 - d. **Mortician:** Identify a local mortician with whom the Peace Corps Medical Officer and Country Director can work for immediate body preparation.
 - e. **Alternate Embalming Facilities:** If no embalming facilities are available within the host country, identify where the nearest mortuary support can be obtained and how quickly its use can be arranged [through the State Department or through the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System].

(h) **Casketing Options:** Determine if caskets are available through U.S. Embassy, USAID, the Armed Services, a hospital, etc. What kind is available - hermetically sealable or other? Are sealed casket inserts available? Are metal transfer cases available?

(i) **Cremation Facilities:** Determine if cremation facilities are available in the host country.

(j) **Host-Country Burial Laws:** Describe the burial laws, regulations and practices of the host country. How long after burial may remains be exhumed?

(k) **Local Death Certificates and Transit Permits:** Determine which government agency and official is authorized to issue death certificates and transit permits.

(l) **U.S. Death Certificates:** Obtain various original Consular Report of Death of a US Citizen Abroad (CROD) certificates from American Citizen Services.

g) Shipping Laws and Regulations:

- (a) **Laws and Practices:** Identify the shipping laws, regulations, and practices of the host country. Is removal of remains in a sealed metal shipping case permissible in lieu of a casket and wood outside shipping case?
- (b) **Preservation Methods:** Determine what method of preservation is required, if any, for shipment from the host country.
- (c) **Administrative Challenges:** Determine how long it normally takes to process shipping documents. Consider delays around local holidays, weekends, etc. Address visa requirements for transit countries and transit country regulations for the transfer of remains from one airline carrier to the next. Describe transit country regulations for accompanying remains in-between flights.
- (d) **Aircraft Capacity:** Determine if commercial aircraft operating in the area have the capacity (dimensional/weight) to transport a casket or other type of container. If not, what special arrangements (charter, travel overland) are possible? Develop a contingency plan for any special arrangements.

IV. Other Questions to Consider

- (a) Can Post handle all details of autopsy, preparation, casketing, and shipment, or would some operations have to be shared with another United States Government or host country Agency, if host country services are limited?
- (b) Will third-country support be necessary to accomplish any of the above? If so, what kind?
- (c) Who should be contacted to assist with any of the above matters at night or on weekends or local holidays, and how can they be reached? Are there any local authorities who can act to facilitate matters if complications arise?

V. Disposition of Remains (attach U.S. Embassy Consular Section report)

VI. Legal Environment Survey: Attach most recent Post Legal Environment

VII. Lesson Learned from Previous Post Responses: Attach any report of lessons learned from previous Post responses.