

DISPOSITION OF REMAINS REPORT

Trinidad & Tobago

- (1) **Maximum Period Before Burial.** There are no national laws in Trinidad and Tobago that require a specific time period for internment, whether the remains are embalmed or not. However, in the circumstance of an infectious case of death the Public Health Act Chapter 12: Part XIV. Section 105: 1(d) requires “speedy” disposal of the remains. The normal period before burial can range from one day to six months, but the body must be properly embalmed to stay in refrigeration after two weeks. The country has a refrigeration capacity of 40 units.

Many factors can affect how much time will be needed to prepare your loved one’s remains for return to the United States. Because of these many variables, it is best not to make unchangeable plans for ceremonies and the like until we and the funeral home you are working with can provide a firm timetable. Here are some estimates of the time various steps of the process may take.

- The police may withhold permission to cremate or embalm for as long as necessary if they believe the death was as the result of a crime which they need to investigate. This investigation may in some instances require an autopsy, which by itself may require one or more days.
- Embalming or cremation may take several days depending on the location of the remains and the schedule of the mortuary company.
- Cremated remains properly prepared may be taken by the Next-of-Kin on a commercial flight. Embalmed remains must be transported as cargo, and require processing by the ground handling company employed by all airlines serving Trinidad & Tobago. The arrangements for shipping may take as long as three days.
- Embalmed remains must be turned over to a licensed mortician at the airport in the U.S. If your hometown mortician is unable to meet a flight, the shipment must be delayed so that it arrives in the U.S. at a time when your hometown mortician can meet the incoming flight.
- In some cases, no space may be available on outgoing flights for embalmed remains, introducing delays.

- (2) **Embalming.** Embalming is available locally, and done according to US Standards. Embalming can be done by Cavity or Cavity Compound and a body can be embalmed any time after death, the sooner the better for preservation. The cost of embalming is general 2000 to 2500 TT, and US qualified embalmers are available locally. In Trinidad and Tobago many human remains are received after an autopsy was conducted (average two days from death). The remains are normally embalmed within twelve (12) hours of receiving. There are approximately eight qualified embalmers in Trinidad. Many funeral homes do not practice embalming while others do a quasi attempt at sanitation by embalming.

- (3) **Cremation.** The Cremation Act Chapter 30:50 legalizes the disposal of human remains by cremation. It addresses both cremations by pyre (traditional) and cremation by retort (modern). The traditional method is mainly used by our Hindu community. There are four modern crematoria in Trinidad, located in Port of Spain, Arima, San Fernando and Trincity. After a cremation is completed using the modern method, the cremains (cremated remains) are usually processed in a fine granular form or powder similar to that as practiced in the USA. In the traditional method, the bone ash is usually disposed of into the nearby sea or river. However when requested the bone ash can be recovered for similar processing the morning following the cremation after the pyre is cooled. Cremations are done on a daily basis. National law permits cremation once the local documentation requirements are met.
- (4) **Caskets and Containers.** Both local and foreign caskets are available locally. Caskets are usually used for repatriation internationally. These caskets are rubber gasket sealed and achieve the same result as a hermetically sealed inner container. They meet the requirements for international shipping of most countries. Imported shipping containers are also used with or without a casket. However where required a metal inner container can be installed in a locally made casket and can be sealed hermetically.
- (5) **Exportation of Remains.** Exportation of human remains can be easily provided, and is done according to Standards set by the U.S. Government for international shipping of human remains and ashes.

When required to repatriate human remains, a funeral home must adhere to the following procedures:

- The official death certificate stating the cause of death is obtained. A minimum of 6 certified copies are obtained.
 - The receiving Funeral Home is contacted.
 - The body is prepared by thoroughly cleaning all orifices, embalmed by arterial and cavity injection with an appropriate embalming chemical. Where an autopsy was done, the remains are embalmed arterially and hypodermically, and all body cavities are treated and closed against leakage. The viscera is separated, treated and replaced. The body is then dressed, cosmetized and casketed.
 - An appointment is made for the District Medical Officer (DMO) to visit and witness the sealing of the casket. This officer issues the Health Certificate and the Transit Permit.
 - The Embalmer issues the Embalming Certificate certifying the completeness of the embalming and that the casket contains only the clothed remains of the deceased.
 - The passport of the deceased and if required all required documents are presented to the Embassy or Consulate of the receiving country.
 - Customs requirement of a Shipping Bill is presented to the Customs and Excise Department of The Ministry of Finance for shipping clearance. A Bill of Lading and an Airway Bill is prepared by the Shipping Agents.
 - The Homeland Security of the United States requires all caskets to be screened prior to being loaded en route to the USA. This is done by the Shipping Agents.
- The Funeral Director communicates with the receiving funeral home and issues a covering letter which is sent prior to shipping and with the remains.

When shipping cremains (post cremation ashes) to the United States of America the procedures are:

- The cremains are placed in an Urn (plastic or metal) and sealed.
- The following documents are completed to accompany the Urn: certified Death Certificate, copy of the Cremation Permit – Form B, copy of the Compliance Certificate – Form D (see the Cremation Act), and an Export Certificate issued by the Cremation Registrar. As a Cremation Authority, funeral homes issue a letter which states that the attached documents are authentic and that the Urn contains only the cremated remain of the deceased.

Funeral homes are guided by the international publications, The Blue Book or The Red Book which list international requirements for shipping human remains. Shipping out of Trinidad is usually done to the US by air.

- (6) **Costs.** The average cost of a local interment inclusive of removal transport, funeral coach, two (2) days refrigeration, embalming, casket, chapel and the opening and closing of a grave is \$4500.00 US dollars.

The average cost of a local cremation inclusive of removal transport, two (2) days refrigeration, embalming, casket (rental), chapel, cremation and urn is \$2700.00 US dollars. The average cost of preparation for shipment inclusive of removal transport, embalming, casket, air tray (crating), documentation and customs, and delivery to the airport is \$7000.00 US dollars. This does not include air freight which varies based on carrier, weight, destination, connecting flights, etc.

Air Freight:

Port of Spain to Miami is in the area of \$4.00 US dollars per kilogram

Port of Spain to New York is in the area of \$5.00 US dollars per kilogram

Miami to most other states is in the area of \$3.00 US dollars per kilogram

Note: The average weight of casketed human remains is in the area of 175kgs. The cost of a simple caskets starts from \$1800 US.

- (7) **Exhumation and Shipment.** The text of the laws for shipment can be obtained from the Blue Book and Red Book provided by the US Government. All countries in the world follow these rules and they are available online. Standard requirements for shipping to USA are applicable at this time.

Estimated Cost (US dollars):

Exhumation and Mortuary Services	=	\$2,000.00
Casket	=	\$4,000.00
Documentation, Airport Delivery	=	\$ 400.00
Air Freight Average	=	\$ 800.00

(Average Weight of Cargo is 175kgs)

Note: air freight varies with weight of cargo, destination, airline routes, connecting flights needed, etc. Currently, only Caribbean Airlines accepts cremated remains for transportation to the USA.

See Burial Grounds Act Chapter 30:50 #12 for more details.

- (8) **Autopsies:** The local authorities are responsible for making findings concerning the cause of death. If it is natural, it can be done by a regular physician. If the cause is murder,

suicide, or accident, it will be done by the Forensic Sciences Centre or General Hospitals. If it is a confirmed case of infectious disease, then the institution will provide a death certificate. Generally an autopsy is mandatory where foul play is suspected or known, or where there was no registered medical practitioner in attendance prior to the death of the person. An autopsy may also be performed by request of the surviving family. All autopsies are conducted by Pathologist registered by the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago. See Coroner's Act Chapter 6:04, # 5 and # 6.

- (9) **Remarks.** Local customs for disposition of remains depends on the religious beliefs of the respective families. The local authorities are responsible for licensing Funeral Directors, and current documents are lodged with the Ministry of Local Government.

U.S. Embassy or Consulate Information

U.S. Embassy Port of Spain

15 Queens Park West, Port of Spain, Trinidad

Phone: 1-868-622-6371

Fax: 1-868-822-5555

After Hours Phone: 1-868-822-5999 or (Duty Officer) 1-868-310-3132

DISCLAIMER: The U.S. Embassy Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago assumes no responsibility or liability for the professional ability or reputation of, or the quality of services provided by, the following persons or firms. Names are listed alphabetically, and the order in which they appear has no other significance. Professional credentials and areas of expertise are provided directly by the funeral directors, morticians and other service providers.

- a. Disposition of Remains (general) – The quality of the disposition of human remains is very good, the cost is reasonable, and there are US qualified embalmers available locally. The cost of embalming is general \$2000 to \$2500 TT. Requirements for an autopsy include someone to identify the remains and either photo ID or a passport.
- b. Specific facts relating to embalming, cremation, caskets, exportation, documentation requirements, preparation, shipment, and exhumation - Embalming is done according to US Standards, cremations are available locally, and you can buy simple caskets from \$1800 US. The exportation of cremated remains is available, documentation can be easily completed for us citizens with authorization of US embassy, and preparation and shipment of human remains can also be easily arranged. Exhumation is also available for approximately \$2,000 US.
- c. As applicable, please include any unique circumstances which may apply to post; for example, special requirements for deaths by infectious disease or under suspicious circumstances - This will be confirmed by the institution where the death occurred, once it is a confirmed case of infectious disease, then the institution will provide a death certificate and will not do a post mortem.
- d. Shipping – Shipping out of Trinidad is usually done to the US by air. Currently, only Caribbean Airlines accepts cremated remains for transportation to the USA.
- e. Local authorities responsible for licensing funeral directors and morticians - Local authorities are responsible for licensing Funeral Directors, and current documents are lodged with the Ministry of Local Government.
- f. Local authorities responsible for making findings regarding the cause of death and for issuing death local certificates – If the cause of death is natural, it can be a regular physician. If the cause is murder, suicide, or an accident, it will be the Forensic Sciences Centre or General Hospitals.