



Death while abroad



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DEATH ABROAD INFORMATION FOR RELATIVES, FRIENDS AND EMPLOYERS

The death of a relative or friend is always distressing, but if it happens abroad the distress can be made worse by practical problems.

After the death of a relative or friend abroad you are likely to have countless questions. What should I do now? How can I communicate with people in a foreign language? Who can I turn to for help?

This leaflet explains what practical support British consular staff can offer you and what you need to do yourself.

IF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND DIES WHILE YOU ARE ABROAD WITH THEM

All deaths must be registered in the country where the death occurs. Your tour guide or business trip organizer, the local police or your Embassy, Consulate can advise you on how to go about this and getting all the information you may need.

Make sure you have as much documentation as possible about the person who has died and yourself. This should include:

- full name
- date of birth
- passport number
- medical DNA or dental records for verification
- when and where the passport was issued
- the name of the next of family of the person who has died

If the person suffered from an infectious condition, for example the Hepatitis or HIV viruses, it is very important that the proper authorities be advised so that they can take proper precautions against infection and contamination. There is no obligation to register a death at your countries Embassy or Consulate, but by doing so you can obtain a death certificate, and a permanent copy of it will always be available in your native tongue in your home country.

Be warned that in certain countries they cannot issue death certificates and certificates given by local officials may be ok for your governments purposes.

It's your responsibility to find out what countries these may be!

IF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND DIES ABROAD WHILE YOU ARE IN AT HOME

- If the death has been reported to your Embassy or Consulate abroad, they will normally pass the details and all information to your local police and ask them to inform the your family members, friends or employer as soon as possible.

If your family members are not in your home country, they will ask their consular staff in the country where they are to do what they can. They will normally do everything they can to make sure that, as

Family members, you do not hear of the death first from the media, but as you can understand they cannot influence what the media does. In this very important circumstance, they try to act rapidly this may mean having to inform relatives by telephone.

- If you hear of the death from a tour group operator, the media, or any other third party you should contact embassy or consulate immediately to verify the information.
- Consular or Embassy staff in your home country may keep in touch with the family and their staff abroad until burial or cremation overseas or until the person has been brought back to the home country.
- Consular or Embassy staff in your home country will pass on to their own staff abroad the requests of the family member about respectable disposal of the body.

They will normally do their best to make sure these wishes and other requests are carried out promptly.

- But be warned that it is not always possible to carry out the wishes of the family members. For example, there may be no facilities for cremation if that is your request due to the religion of that country where the individual has died. And in some countries, post-mortem investigations are carried out without permission of the family members. Sometimes organs will be removed and kept without the family members being informed or consulted. You should also be aware that in some countries a lack of suitable storage for the body.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND YOUR HOME COUNTRY EMBASSY:

Support is provided by your country's diplomatic and consular missions overseas, abroad and by the Consular Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in your home country. Diplomatic missions overseas/abroad are the Government's main offices in other countries, usually in capital cities but not in all cases. These take the form of High Commissions or Deputy High Commissions in Commonwealth countries and Embassies in other countries. You may also find Consulates General or Consulates in capital cities or regional centers. In some places where there is no diplomatic or consular office, they may have Honorary Consuls who can offer some limited assist you to get in touch with the nearest proper office.

WHAT KIND OF HELP THEY CAN PROVIDE WHEN SOMEONE HAS DIED ABROAD

- keep the family informed and try to ensure you don't feel that you alone;
- tell you the cost of local burial, local cremation (if possible) and transport of the body and personal belongings back to you;
- provide you a list of local and international funeral directors. If person speaking your native language firm is not available, the staff can possibly help you with the arrangements;
- help transfer money from friends and relatives in paying any necessary costs;
- where there is evidence of suspicious circumstances concerning the death, they can suggest the best way to raise concerns with the local authorities. They can offer basic information about the local police system and legal system.

When informed of how any investigation is progressing, they can pass on any details. But in some countries, the investigating authorities and the courts may refuse to answer enquiries from third parties including your consular staff. In these circumstances, the family should consider hiring a local lawyer. As with funeral directors, they can also provide lists of local lawyers and interpreters.

Warning!

Neither the Government nor the relevant Embassy or Consulate can make any guarantee in relation to the professional ability or character of any person or company on the list, nor can they be held responsible in any way for you relying on any advice you are given. In some countries they may be criminally oriented!

YOUR EMBESSY OR COUNSOLATE CANNOT

- investigate deaths ourselves;
- give legal advice;
- pay burial or cremation expenses;
- pay for the return of bodies;
- pay any debts that may be outstanding or pay any other expenses that you have encored for investigations or other purposes.

GENERAL HELP AND ADVICE

The emotions you may experience after a personal crisis such as the death of a relative, friend or an employee can be traumatic. It is Very important to remember that help for you and others available. Some people will not want or feel the need to talk to anyone outside their family and friends, but for others it may be essential and a must. There is nothing wrong with knowing that you need help. By refusing to get yourself help, you may also be killing your own spirit and do more damage than needed.

GET HELP!

For more information or you would like to arrange a travel security seminar for your company or organization, please feel free to contact us at:

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