

AGREED PROCEDURE TO ISSUE A TRANSIT CERTIFICATE FOR TRANSPORTATION OF A BODY OVERSEAS

Area Health Service Public Health Units (AHSPHU), from time to time receive requests to provide Transit Certificates to assist with the transportation of a body to foreign countries. The requirements of transportation of bodies to foreign countries are guided by international rules and regulations. In general, embalming of a body is required for transportation internationally. Freezing the body or using dry ice can be used during transportation of unembalmed body as an alternative method of preservation.

It should be noted that there is no legal requirement to issue a Transit Certificate. A Transit Certificate is issued as a free service to assist the receiving country and the relatives and friends of the deceased.

Under international regulation the commonly required documents for transportation of the body are:

- Death Certificate
- Medical Certificate of cause of death
- Certificate of embalming
- Transit Certificate from the health authority with a declaration of the status of certain infectious diseases

Although no Transit Certificate is required for transportation of cremated human remains, the following documents are required for international transporting of ashes:

- Death certificate
- Cremation certificate
- Statement from the crematorium that the container holds only the cremated remains of the deceased

Steps to issue a Transit Certificate:

1. Funeral Directors or persons organising the process should contact the Embassy or Consulate of the country of destination. This is because in addition to the general international rules, the country receiving the body might have specific requirements.
2. The PHU should receive the following related documents at least 48 hours before the intended date of transport including:
 - Letter from the Funeral Director or person handling the process requesting a Transit Certificate with the name of deceased and expected date of transport.
 - Letter from the Embassy or Consulate stating their requirements if the country of destination has specific requirements in addition to international regulation.

- Medical Certificate of cause of death.
- Death Certificate issued by the Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages.
- Statement from a medical practitioner that deceased did not have any infectious disease. If this is not be available then reliance should be placed on the Death Certificate.
- Certificate of embalming (if available). In case a body is not embalmed and other options such freezing is to be used for preserving a body, the Public Health Units has to be satisfied that this practice does not contravene international regulation. This is to be achieved by a statement from the Embassy of the country receiving the body, supplied by Funeral Director.
- Order authorising the disposal of a body if it is a Coroner's case.

3. PHU assesses the documents and prepares a Transit Certificate on letterhead.

There are generally 5 different types of the transit certificate can be issued depending on circumstances:

- a. Cause of death provided / no infectious diseases present
(Appendix A)
- b. Cause of death provided / statement about infectious disease status not provided **(Appendix B)**
- c. Cause of death provided / deceased carried or infected or died from infectious diseases **(Appendix C)**
- d. Coroner's case / order authorising the disposal of a body provided/ cause of death provided / no infectious diseases present
(Appendix D)
- e. Coroner's case / order authorising the disposal of a body presents / cause of death not provided / no infectious disease present
(Appendix E)

Circumstances may not be limited to just the above. Therefore the PHU should determine the appropriate response in each case. For example, if the deceased is infected with a list B diseases (diphtheria, plague, respiratory anthrax, smallpox, tuberculosis or viral haemorrhagic fevers) and it is requested to transport the body overseas, the PHU needs to be satisfied that the overseas country is willing to receive the body. The funeral director must supply documented evidence or statement from the Embassy of the country receiving the body to this effect.

4. Advise the Funeral Director or appropriate person and send the Transit Certificate. In some cases the Funeral Director may wish to collect the Transit Certificate personally.