

Don't Sweat Shipping

WHAT TO DO WHEN
A Loved One
DIES AWAY FROM HOME



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These days, our world is more connected than ever. People travel, move, and retire away from home frequently. When a loved one dies away from home, either in another state or abroad, it can make things more complicated.

Transporting a loved one generally will require the involvement of 2 funeral homes. The one in the location where your loved one passed away, and the one you are choosing to use at the funeral location.

The good news is, funeral directors have experience with these types of situations and are available to help guide families through the necessary steps and paperwork to coordinate the transportation of a loved one.



Domestic Transport

Land Transportation

A deceased's body can be transported by ground if the distance is not too far. This is usually the cheapest option and can be arranged by a funeral home. Costs vary, but are typically between \$1.00 to \$4.00 per mile.

If it is too far to drive, rail transportation is another option. There are extra fees required for shipping via rail.

Depending on the states you are shipping to and from, the rules will differ about how a deceased's body must be prepared. Some states will require that a body must be embalmed before crossing state lines. Others allow the use of dry ice or a refrigerated transport. Your funeral home will be able to help you understand and navigate these options.

Air Transportation

If it is too far for a loved one to travel by ground, then air transportation is the other option. There are several airline companies that offer human remains cargo shipping. In this case, your funeral home will help you contact one of these carriers and make the preparations.

There are more requirements when a deceased's body is transported via air. They will need to be prepared especially for this type of travel. This will require either embalming or the use of dry ice, and likely a particular type of freight casket. There will also be legal paperwork to complete to allow your loved one to be transported across state lines.



Permits, Paperwork & Costs

Permits and paperwork can vary from one state to the next, and the best approach is to simply ask the funeral home director about it. Contact a funeral home director in the state of the death, as well as the funeral director who will ultimately be helping you with the memorial service and burial. Ask both about their experience with this sort of thing, and try to find a way to complete paperwork just at one end of the journey—which can reduce costs.

There usually are some significant shipping and receiving costs. The dispatching funeral home will charge a “ship-out” fee. This fee is for collecting the deceased from the place of death and preparing them for shipment. Other fees will be required if embalming is necessary.

There are also fees based on the actual transportation costs. These differ based on the method of transportation. For airline travel, fees can be between \$600 and \$3000. These fees are based on the weight of the body, the shipping container chosen, and the length of the journey.

Note that, for families looking into cremation, this can be a significant cost saver: You can have the cremation performed in one state and then transport the urn to another for a memorial and internment service.

Make sure to contact funeral directors in both states as soon as you can—enlisting their support and their advice as you coordinate this important process. These individuals will be able to help you navigate the entire process from beginning to end and ensure that proper permits and government bureaucracy are handled correctly.



International Transport

What happens when a person dies in a foreign country, or when the family of that person wishes to hold the funeral abroad?

This sort of thing happens more and more often. Ours is a world “on the go,” with many Americans now hailing from different countries, and many native-born Americans choosing to retire or relocate abroad.

Regardless of the specific circumstances, this can lead to some significant complications in preparing and shipping a body internationally. International funeral shipping providers exist for this very reason—professionals whose sole job is to help families get their deceased loved ones back to the nation where funeral services are planned.

The most difficult part of these preparations is getting the paperwork together. What makes it difficult is that all countries have different requirements for the paperwork needed. The most cautious approach is to call the foreign embassy or consulate to ask which documents will be required.

A good starting point includes the death certificate, burial/transit papers, the deceased’s passport, and a letter from the funeral home assuring that only human remains are in the casket. This letter should be on funeral home letterhead. Notes from the coroner or medical examiner, ensuring no contagious disease is present, will also help.

Pricing

Of course there are also tremendous costs to consider, as shipping a casket and a body can add up. International transport requires more time and paperwork, so there are more fees. International ship out fees can vary between \$3,000 - \$4,000. There will also be an international mortuary cargo fee, which varies between \$2,000 - \$6,000.

A way around this cost is to have the body cremated and then simply transport the cremated remains, which will require a fraction of the cost. However, should you choose to ship the body, note that only certain airlines provide this type of transport, and in many cases special burial containers or vaults are also required.

Above all, ensure that you are working with funeral professionals in both countries to help ensure a smooth, expedited delivery of the loved one’s body.

International Shipping Providers

An international shipping provider will make all the shipping arrangements for you. They will collect the deceased from the place of death and move them to a funeral facility. They will also make sure all your paperwork is in order and correct and that the deceased's body is properly prepared for transport. Since countries have different requirements, it can be difficult to navigate all the bureaucracy.

Other things International Shipping Providers will do:

- ensure the correct type of casket
- ensure the right type of shipping container
- coordinate all paperwork on both ends
- handle the booking of the flights
- confirm flight availability and possibly help with discounts
- liaise with the receiving country and funeral provider
- ensure that all human remains regulations are met on both ends



Frequently Asked Questions

How do I choose a mortuary provider?

You should choose a funeral home that has experience handling the transporting of human remains. There are several international mortuary shipping companies that can be used by the funeral homes. You can ask for pricing on each to find the best price as costs may vary. Once you start the process the shipping company will likely work directly with the funeral home and not the family in order to make things easier for you.

How long does it take to arrange for transport overseas?

It depends, but in this case time is of the essence. It typically takes about 5 days if there are not any complications with the paperwork. However, cargo transportation works differently than regular air travel. Space must be booked by weight and size. And the max number of human remains that can be transported on any flight is two. All these things must be checked before confirming a flight, so this process itself can take a few days. It is best to not make assumptions about the time involved and know that everyone is working behind the scenes to make sure your loved one returns as quickly as possible.

When should I start making funeral arrangements?

Since there are many unknowns in the process it is often best to wait until your loved one is safely at the receiving funeral home before making plans. While everyone will work to make sure things go as smoothly as possible, complications can arise. Paperwork may be incomplete or missing. Flights can be delayed or canceled.

Can I fly home with my loved one?

Of course, you are always welcome to accompany your loved one on the final flight. Since human remains are shipped on regular passenger flights this is certainly a possibility as long as there is room.

It is important to remember, however, that there can be delays in the process. Flights may be delayed or canceled. Or your loved one may reach a location and the paperwork may not be correct. There are typically many layovers with international cargo flights and they may also have longer than normal lay over times.

If you are planning on traveling with your loved one you will want to prepare yourself for these types of delays and know that there is a possibility of challenges arising. For many, this may be too much at an already difficult time of grief and it may be better to take a different flight, knowing your loved one will be well taken care of by the shipping company.

**We would be honored to
assist you and your family.**

Please contact us with any questions, comments or
concerns you may have.

