

**DEATH OF SINGAPOREANS OVERSEAS
RETURN OF REMAINS TO SINGAPORE
- A GUIDE FOR BEREAVED FAMILIES**

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INTRODUCTION

The death of a relative can be traumatic and distressing. This guide serves to provide general guidance to the family of a Singaporean who has passed away overseas.

Please note that some parts of this guide may not apply in certain cases due to the different circumstances surrounding each death, varying local laws and customs, and the availability of certain facilities in different countries.

What Our Consular Officers can do

- Notify the Next-of-Kin (NOK) of the incident;
- Provide a list of local undertakers;
- Advice on the cost of local burial/cremation and transportation of remains and personal belongings of the deceased to Singapore;
- Remit money from family members, relatives or friends in Singapore to pay for any costs incurred, if necessary.

What Our Consular Officers **cannot** do

- Investigate the cause of death;
- Make insurance claim on behalf of the family of the deceased;
- Provide legal advice;
- Pay for burial or cremation expenses;
- Pay for the return of the remains to Singapore;
- Pay for any outstanding bills or debts. In the absence of suitable medical/travel insurance, the NOK or friends of the deceased are expected to cover these expenses.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Once notified of the death of a Singaporean overseas, the Embassy/Consulates will verify the deceased's identity (i.e. name, date of birth, passport number) and NOK's contact details through the assistance of the relevant Singapore authorities.

Upon notification, NOK will need to:

- a. Confirm if the deceased had purchased a comprehensive travel insurance which covers death and repatriation of remains. If so, NOK should notify the insurance company immediately.
- b. Decide who would travel to overseas to identify the body and make the necessary arrangements (e.g. collect the deceased's personal belongings, liaise with the local funeral director etc). Inform the Embassy/Consulates of the NOK's names, contact numbers and flight details. At least one NOK should bring along a valid document as proof of relationship to the deceased, e.g. birth certificate or marriage certificate etc.
- c. Decide whether to repatriate the body to Singapore or to cremate the deceased locally and bring back the ashes.
- d. Appoint an undertaker in Singapore. If the decision is to repatriate the body to Singapore, NOK are advised to appoint an undertaker who is familiar with international repatriation arrangements and requirements.
- e. Some religious beliefs stipulate that the casket has to be accompanied by the NOK back to Singapore. If the NOK hold such beliefs, it is advisable to inform the Embassy/Consulates and the appointed undertaker overseas in advance so that arrangements can be made for NOK to travel on the same flight as the casket.

If the cause of death is not due to natural causes, NOK should request for a police report.

REPATRIATION OF BODY BACK TO SINGAPORE

For repatriation of the body to Singapore, it is necessary to prepare the following essential documents to accompany the casket which would facilitate clearance of the casket into Singapore:

a. Death Certificate

The death certificate should indicate the following:

- Deceased's name (Ensure that the name is in ENGLISH as indicated in the passport);
- Nationality;
- Passport number;
- Date of death; and
- Cause of death

The original death certificate must accompany the casket. If NOK is not travelling on the same flight as the casket and is holding on to the original death certificate, he must ensure that there is at least one copy of the death certificate accompanying the casket.

b. Embalming Certificate

This is to certify that the body has been embalmed. Please inform the embalmer-undertaker to remove any heart pacer from the deceased's body, if any.

c. Sealing Certificate

This is to certify that the coffin is hermetically sealed and metal-lined.

d. Coffin Export Permit

This is a permit usually issued by the Port Health Officer or a medical officer of a relevant medical department/authority in the country of origin to authorise export of the body and is often required by the local authority.

e. Airway Bill

f. Additional Information

If the deceased's body is to be brought back to Singapore for cremation, it is important to note that the cremation chamber in Singapore can only accommodate coffins up to the maximum dimensions of length 210cm (7 ft), width 60cm (2ft) and height 56cm (1ft 10 inches). If the chosen coffin is unable to fit into the cremation chamber, additional costs would be incurred for the body to be transferred to another coffin.

For burial of remains in Singapore, the coffin size should not exceed length 210 cm and width 90 cm (there is no restriction on the coffin height for burial.)

g. ***Exhumation Certificate***

This is applicable only in cases where exhumed remains of the deceased are to be brought into Singapore.

If the above documents are not in English, an English translation must be provided especially for death and embalming certificates. Translations from private organisations are accepted. The Embassy/Consulates are not empowered to provide translation services.

The above documents, together with a Letter of Authorisation, should be faxed to the appointed undertaker in Singapore who will assist to apply for an import permit from the National Environment Agency in Singapore (NEA) to facilitate the importation of the body into Singapore.

The NOK are to inform the Embassy/Consulates of the departure details of the casket such as date and flight number. The information would be conveyed to Singapore NEA Port Health Office to facilitate the clearance procedures.

Other Relevant Information

If the deceased suffered from an infectious condition, e.g. Hepatitis, HIV, SARS, Avian Flu, Influenza A (H1N1-2009) etc, it is essential to inform the authorities in both overseas and Singapore so that the necessary precautions can be taken.

The body of such person person may be allowed into Singapore. However, the following guidelines for the importation and cremation/burial of the body must be adhered to:

- a. Only approved undertakers can handle the body of a deceased who suffered from an infectious condition. The undertakers are to follow strictly the general precautionary measures.
- b. Double-bag the body in heavy duty plastic body bags before placing it in a sealed coffin.
- c. Hermetically seal the coffin at the joints with silicone.
- d. The lid of the coffin is not to be opened at any time.

More information is available on NEA website
(<http://www.nea.gov.sg/passesaway/index.htm>).

CREMATION & IMPORTATION OF ASHES INTO SINGAPORE

If it is decided to cremate the deceased overseas, the following documents are required in order to bring the ashes back to Singapore:

a. Death Certificate

The death certificate should indicate the following:

- Deceased's name (Ensure that the name is in ENGLISH as indicated in the passport);
- Nationality;
- Passport number;
- Date of death; and
- Cause of death

b. Cremation Certificate

The ashes should be placed in a covered container and accompanied by the death Certificate and cremation Certificate of the deceased. There is no requirement for a permit to bring ashes into Singapore. However, NOK should check with the relevant airline if it allows ashes to be hand-carried onboard the plane.

When choosing an urn, NOK may also wish to take into consideration the size of the niche in the Columbarium where the urn would be placed. For e.g., the dimensions of a niche at Mandai Crematorium & Columbarium are 235mm(width) x 210mm(height) x 250mm(depth).

Other Relevant Information

There is no restriction to bringing the ashes of a deceased who suffered from an infectious condition, e.g. Hepatitis, HIV, SARS, Avian Flu, Influenza A (H1N1-2009) etc, back to Singapore

HOW TO REGISTER A DEATH IN SINGAPORE

Upon returning to Singapore, NOK have to personally report the death of the deceased at the Registry of Births & Deaths, Citizen Centre, 3rd Storey, ICA Building. If the NOK is unable to report the death personally at ICA, a letter of authorisation will be required.

The following documents are to be presented for the registration:

- a. Original Death Certificate (an English-translated copy is required if the death certificate is not in English);
- b. Coffin (Import/Export) permit;
- c. Permit to Bury/Cremate;
- d. Deceased's Singapore identity card, passport, Citizenship Certificate (if any); and
- e. Informant's identification documents.

More information is available on ICA website (<http://www.ica.gov.sg>).

USEFUL CONTACTS IN SINGAPORE

This list of contacts here is only meant to serve as a reference. NOK may also source for other companies via other means such as the internet or Yellow Pages.

Neither the Singapore Government nor the Embassy/Consulates can make any guarantee in relation to the professional ability or character of any person or company on this list.

Organisation	Details	Contact Number
Mandai Crematorium & Columbarium	Address: 300 Mandai Road, S(779393)	Tel: 6554 5655
Association of Funeral Directors (Singapore)	http://www.nea.gov.sg/passesa-way/afd.htm	
Choa Chu Kang Cemetery Booking Office	Address: 910 Choa Chu Kang Road, S(699819)	Tel: 6793 7428
Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery	Address: 88 Bright Hill Drive	Tel: 6849 5333
Choa Chu Kang Columbarium	Address: 51 Chinese Cemetery Path 4, S(698932)	Tel: 6795 9731