

Final Journey...

(A Brief Note on Checklist to handle the End-of-Life Situations)

By

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(This is the author's compilation of personal study, hands-on handling of such situations over three decades in the USA. Several basic elements are common across the USA but there might be some minor variations from State to State)

Final Journey...

jatasya hi dhruvo mrtuyur
dhruvam janma mrtasya ca
tasmat apariharye 'the
na tvam socitum arhasi

(Bhagavad Gita 2.27)

Death is CERTAIN of that which is BORN;
BIRTH is CERTAIN of that which is DEAD.

Therefore, in the unavoidable discharge of your duty, you should not lament.

As quoted in epic Hindu scripture Bhagavad Gita, Death is Inevitable and Certain. It is at this critical time in ones life that one has to develop the necessary strength and courage to face the situation and do what is expected in the age old cycle of human life – the funeral process of disposing the human body.

In our lifetime, we face this situation many times in the community we live in. Unlike in India where the necessary infrastructure is readily available conducive to the Indian life conditions, it is not so easy in overseas. The local customs and infrastructure to handle such situations are present but may not be amenable for Indian way of funeral services.

It is common for most of us not knowing the formalities or having any close contacts with funeral homes until it is absolutely necessary. When it is needed, family members will be in shock, can't think straight and get panic to make proper final arrangements for their loved ones. Some funeral homes try to extract as much money as they could depending on the situations. Choosing the right funeral home is the key to have respectable last rites to loved ones. The quicker we provide the following information, the faster the funeral homes can provide needed services. Some State laws permit family members to take the deceased home if a person dies someplace else other than at home. Deceased will be transported directly from the place of death to the funeral home of a family's choice. All funeral homes may not have Crematorium / Burial facilities but may have agreements with nearby funeral homes. Family members have right to choose whatever the facility they prefer.

Information required for funeral services in the USA

	Name of the deceased
	Sex
	Date of Birth
	Age
	Birth Place
	Social Security
	Race
	Education
	Marital Status
	Surviving Spouse (if applicable)
	Decedent's occupation
	Kind of Business / Industry
	Residence Address
	Father's Name
	Mother's Maiden Name
	Place of Death – Hospital / Nursing Home / Residence / Other
	County of Death
	City / Town
	Name of Hospital
	Name of the Informant
	Informant's Mailing address
	Method of Disposition – Burial/Cremation/Removal from State/Donation/Other

Note: Funeral home staff will contact hospital authorities to obtain death certificate and county officials to get county death registration certificate.

Information required in sending the deceased to Abroad

	Passport of deceased
	Burial Permit / Transit Permit
	One certified copy of the death certificate
	A letter of preparation on funeral home letterhead stating the remains have been hermetically sealed within a zinc lined wooden container (must be notarized)
	Letter of 'non-contagious' diseases from the department of Health (with official raised seal)
	No casket requirements
	Zinc lined outer wood box
	If a homicide, a letter of permission to ship from the Police department involved in the investigation and the District Attorney's office
	One photocopy of all the above documents.
	Inspection of Consul General of India is not required. Consulate fee is \$21.00 (estimated)

Note: Funeral home staff will contact concerned officials, coordinate in getting all the necessary documents, airlines to transport the body to overseas provided they have all the required information from the family members in a timely manner. It is estimated that it would take a minimum of three to five days to ship the body depending on the situations. It may cost around \$5,000 to \$8,000 to send the deceased to Asian countries depending on various logistics.

Services provided by Funeral Homes

Usually, most of the funeral homes provide these following services like ...

	Transport the body from hospital / home / out of state to the funeral home
	Make arrangements with hospital / county officials to get death certificates
	Refrigerate the body
	Arrangements for viewing / memorial services
	Dressing, cosmetology services
	Embalming
	Memorial book
	Flower arrangements
	Chapel/Priestly services
	Motor Escort
	Cremation Urns
	Temporary storage of cremation Urns
	Casket types – Bronze / Hardwood / Stainless Steel / Steel / Cloth covered wood / Card Board Box
	Family Car (Limousine) / Pallbearer Car (Limousine) / Funeral Coach (Hearse) / Service

Note: Embalming (preserve from decay by arterial injection of a preservative) is not required by law if the burial or cremation takes place within 24 hours. Embalming is also not required if the body is refrigerated or placed in an approved sealed container within 24 hours of death. In all other cases, Embalming is must.