

DISPOSITION OF REMAINS REPORT - LAOS

1. Maximum period before burial: There are no laws or regulations in Laos specifying a maximum period before burial. As a practical matter a corpse which has not been embalmed must be buried or cremated within three days. A body which has been "embalmed" locally must be buried or cremated within seven days because of the low standards of embalming that are available in Laos.

There are few cemeteries for local interment in Laos. No American has been buried in Laos within memory of Vientiane's embassy staff. Within Vientiane, there are cemeteries associated with the Chinese and Vietnamese communities and the Roman Catholic church. Circumstances would determine whether it would be possible to bury in Laos a person who had not been a member of one of these communities. The cost for the service and burial plot is subject to negotiation if it can be done at all.

2. Embalming: There are no professional embalming facilities in Laos. However, embalming solution is usually available for purchase in Vientiane. If the corpse is at a hospital, family members can often pay hospital staff to inject the body with the embalming solution. If the body is at home, family members can do it themselves. This is only effective in preserving the body for a few extra days. Given Laos' tropical climate, embalming is recommended as soon as feasibly possible.

3. Cremation: Cremation is the normal means of disposition of remains in Laos and is permissible under Lao law and custom. There are no modern crematoriums in Laos. All cremations are performed at Buddhist temples with wood as the fuel and sometimes with diesel or gasoline as an accelerant. Cremation facilities in Laos are very rudimentary, resulting in larger-sized pieces of bones rather than a fine ash.

4. Caskets and Containers: Caskets and containers available locally do NOT meet minimum requirements for air shipment of a corpse. Wooden caskets are available in Laos for use in cremation or local interment. Light caskets designed for cremations cost around \$50. More substantial hardwood caskets for burial cost around \$100. Hermetically sealed caskets are not available in Laos.

5. Exportation of Remains: There are no laws or regulations concerning the exportation of ashes and remains. Despite of the

lack of formal regulations, authorities will require a death certificate, permission from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and sometimes permission from the Ministry of Interior before permitting either a corpse or ashes to be transported out of the country. Lao authorities have advised that the same certificates and documents are required to ship ashes as for the export of whole remains. The only viable method of exporting whole remains to the U.S. is by using the services of a Thailand-based funeral service.

6. Costs:

Morgue storage: \$30 to \$50 per day
Local Interment: \$400 to \$800
Cremation: \$400 to \$800
Shipment of ashes: \$100 to \$250
Local Embalming: \$200 to \$300
Preparation/Shipment to U.S.: \$4000 to the West Coast and up to \$5000 to the Midwest and East Coast

7. Exhumation and Shipment: There are no laws or regulations concerning the disinterment of remains. Outside of Vientiane it is not uncommon that local authorities will bury deceased foreigners as a form of temporary storage until such time as the deceased can be identified and retrieved by the appropriate Embassy. Other embassies have exhumed and shipped remains several months after the death.

Mortuaries:

Vientiane - Nousiane Casket & Funeral Stupas
64/2 Neiamit Street,
Unit 9, Thongkhankham Tay Village
Vientiane, Laos
Tel: (856) 21-213-838
Cell: (856) 20-515-892

Nousiane offers a Lao style package including embalming, casket, ceremony, a three day car service, and cremation for \$400-\$700. Nousiane does not provide local burial services or repatriation of the body.

Bangkok - Teckhong International Repatriation Services
Mr. Hirun Thurdnampetch
81 Rama 4 Road, Pomprab
Bangkok 10100
Thailand

Tel: (66) 2-221-1680, 2-221-5091, 2-222-3009

Fax: (66) 2-623-0388, 2-226-1445

Cell: (66) 81-854-3165

E-mail: repatriation@teck-hong.com

Website: <http://www.teck-hong.com>

Teckhong will retrieve the corpse from Vientiane, transfer the remains to Thailand, prepare the remains, and ship the corpse back to the United States for about \$4,000-5,000. Teckhong is one of only two viable options in cases where the corpse must be repatriated to the United States.

John Allison Monkhouse Co. Ltd, (Thailand)

President Park, Park View Tower

99/243 (30B) Pine Tower

Sukhumvit Soi 24, Klongton, Klongtoey,

Bangkok 10110

Thailand

Tel: +66 (0) 2382 5345 - 7

Fax: +66(0) 2262 9133

E-mail: apple@monkhouse.com.au

Website: www.monkhouse.com.au

Website: www.funeralrepatriation.com

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8. Autopsies: There are no regulations or requirements regarding autopsies but they are generally not performed in Laos as a matter of cultural practice. Laos also lacks skilled professionals able to undertake such a task.

9. Remarks: Laos is a developing country with very little modern infrastructure. Medical facilities and services related to death and burial or cremation are limited and do not meet Western standards. Communication with parts of Laos outside of its cities along the Mekong River is also limited. This can result in lengthy delays in obtaining death certificates and other necessary documents from the Lao authorities.