



**Embassy of the United States of America  
Majuro, Marshall Islands**

**UNCLASSIFIED  
MEMORANDUM**

DATE: November 25, 2011  
TO: Department of State – CA/OCS/ACS/EAP  
FROM: American Embassy, Majuro  
TAGS: CASC  
SUBJECT: DEATH: Disposition of Remains Report  
REF: 7 FAM 260

**Part I. Name of Country**

Marshall Islands

**Part II. U.S. Embassy Information**

U.S. Embassy, Majuro  
Address: Mejen Weto, Long Island, Majuro 96960  
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[State Department Country Specific Information](#)

[State Department Travel Information](#)

Register with the U.S. Embassy with the [Smart Travel Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#)

**Part III. Profile of Religions of the Host Country and Religious Services Available to Visitors**

Country Profile: Visit the State Department's website, "[Background Note: Marshall Islands](#)"

Religions: Christianity, primarily Protestant denominations. Other Christian denominations include Roman Catholic, Seventh-day Adventist, Mormon, Salvation Army, and Jehovah's Witness. Small Jewish and Ahmadiyya Muslim communities also exist.

Religious Activities for Visitors: Some English-language services are available in the Majuro areas for members of most denominations.

#### **Part IV. Funeral Directors, Mortician and Related Services Available in the Host Country**

DISCLAIMER: The U.S. Embassy, Majuro, Marshall Islands assumes no responsibility or liability for the professional ability or reputation of, or the quality of services provided by, the following institutions. Names are listed alphabetically, and the order in which they appear has no other significance. Professional credentials and areas of expertise are provided directly by the service providers.

There are no funeral directors or private morticians available in the Marshall Islands. All preparation of remains is done by the Ministry of Health. The quality of care provided is substandard to the expectations of individuals using a reputable funeral company in the United States.

- Majuro Public Hospital  
Delap Island, adjacent to Capitol Building  
Majuro Atoll

Mortician Point of Contact: Russell Edwards  
Tel: (692) 625-5660  
Cell Phone: (692) 455-1028

Embalming Point of Contact: Nexon Jablon  
Tel: (692) 625-3355  
Cell Phone: (692) 456-6329

- Ebeye Hospital  
Kwajalein Atoll

Point of Contact: Ms. Irene Paul  
Tel: (692) 329-8030

- Pacific Islands International (Cremation Services only)  
Long Island  
Majuro Atoll

Point of Contact: Jelton Bwijie Shen  
Tel: (692) 247-5030

- Medi-Source Pacific Inc. (Hearse transportation service only)  
Uliga, Majuro  
Point of Contact: Mr. Sandy Alfred  
Tel: (692) 625-3784

## **Part V. Profile of Services Available in the Marshall Islands Regarding Preparation and Shipment of Remains**

### **1. MAXIMUM PERIOD BEFORE BURIAL OF REMAINS/EMBALMING**

RMI law does not place a time limit on burial, whether or not the remains are embalmed. However, local custom generally dictates that a body be buried or embalmed within seven days from death. If a body is embalmed, the body is usually buried after seven days. While burial is the most common way of disposing of remains, land is scarce and there are no public cemeteries.

### **2. EMBALMING**

All embalming is performed by the Ministry of Health, either in Majuro or Ebeye. Embalming is generally done as soon as possible but no later than 7 days after death.

### **3. CREMATION**

Cremation is uncommon, due to cultural and religious taboos against the practice. There are no crematoria in the Marshall Islands. However, some have contracted with Pacific Island International to perform cremation services on an ad hoc basis. PII cremation procedures will not result in the same sized fine ash as it does in the United States. There are no defined legal requirements related to cremation.

#### 4. CASKETS AND CONTAINERS

There are no Marshallese laws governing the exportation of human remains. A casket containing a body or human ashes is treated as ordinary freight. The sole international airline servicing the Marshall Islands—United/Continental—requires that the body be placed in a metal lined casket. The casket is then placed in a freight carton. Some local companies have a few caskets in stock and can build a casket upon request. Casket can be requested from the Ministry of Health

Ashes are placed in a sealed container suitable to pass through the x-ray machine as required by TSA when they are carried by an individual on board an aircraft or mailed overseas through the U.S. Postal Service.

#### 5. EXPORTATION OF REMAINS

Documentary requirements for exportation of human remains are as follows:

##### HUMAN REMAINS

- (a) Death Certificate from the Ministry of Health, issued and signed by a physician;
- (b) Removal Form stating that the remains have no quarantined diseases issued and signed by a physician;
- (c) Embalming certificate issued by the Ministry of Health;
- (d) Memo from National police department documenting approval for remains to leave the island;
- (e) Consular Report of Death issued by the Consular Officer.

##### HUMAN CREMAINS/ASHES

- (a) Death Certificate from the Ministry of Health, issued and signed by a physician;

(b) Consular Report of Death, issued by the Consular Officer.

## 6. COSTS

Charges are based on the U.S. Dollar which is the currency of the Marshall Islands.

### Local Burial:

Estimated costs including wood casket, certificates, embalming and burial at cemetery with service:

US\$925

### Local Cremation:

Estimated costs including transportation of remains to PII facilities and cremation fees:

US\$1,400

### Preparation and shipment of deceased to USA:

Estimated costs related to preparation of human remains for shipment (assuming 200KG) including embalming, metal casket, shipping container, legal documentation and certificates, and shipping costs by air from Majuro:

To Honolulu      US\$1,650

To Washington D.C.      US\$3,725

### Preparation and shipment of cremated remains to USA:

Estimated costs including cremation fees and shipment costs:

US\$1,400

NOTE: All prices quoted above are estimated shipping costs only and may be subject to change.

## 7. EXHUMATION AND SHIPMENT

Exhumation of remains is extremely rare in the Marshall Islands. No officials at the Ministry of Health recall any exhumation occurring in recent history. There are no established protocols or laws regarding an exhumation. The Ministry of Health will address exhumation on an ad hoc basis.

## 8. AUTOPSIES

Autopsies are rare in the Marshall Islands and generally are only performed upon request from the RMI National Court or the RMI Attorney General's office. The costs and procedures vary according to the specific circumstances surrounding the death. The Ministry of Health is responsible for conducting the autopsy, however, there are currently no qualified coroners in country.

## 9. REMARKS

Marshallese funeral includes a wake, burial in a family grave, and a memorial ceremony. During the wake, known as the *Ilomej*, the embalmed body usually remains in the custody of the family for one week, during which time extended family and friends pay their respects and celebrate the life of the deceased. Mourners traditionally bring condolence money (usually one dollar per person) and surviving family members prepare a large quantity of food for those who pay their respects during the week. The *Ilomej* is frequently the most expensive part of a funeral and can cost over \$5,000.

The burial ceremony usually occurs about one week after death. As the body is laid in the grave, remarks are given by the *Iroij* (paramount chief) and *Alap* (chief) who own the land where the dead is buried and the parents or immediate relatives of the deceased.

Three days after the burial, a memorial service, known as the *Eorak*, is conducted at the burial site. Family members place white pebbles or coral around the grave site, signifying that tensions among family members have been removed and the dead may rest in peace.