

October 29, 2013

Disposition of a U.S. Citizen's Remains in British Columbia and Yukon

The following information is submitted in accordance with current regulations to provide data on Canadian laws and practices on the disposition of remains in the Consulate General consular district, which comprises British Columbia and Yukon.

Maximum Period Before Burial

There are no laws in British Columbia or Yukon requiring burial within a prescribed period of time. After 72 hours, the body can be held in cold storage, either embalmed or in a permanently sealed casket, until a decision regarding disposition is made. The only exception is when a person dies of a contagious disease.

Embalming

All full service licensed funeral providers in British Columbia and Yukon either have embalming facilities or access to them.

Cremation

A person must not present human remains for cremation unless the remains are enclosed in a container that is of sufficient strength to hold and conveniently transfer the remains, prevents the remains from posing a health hazard, and meets the requirements set out in the Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Act. An operator of a crematorium must not cremate human remains within 48 hours after the time of death unless the operator is ordered to do so by a medical officer under the *Public Health Act*.

Caskets and Containers

Unless permitted by the regulations, a funeral provider and an operator must not refuse to accept or handle a container to enclose human remains that meets the requirements of the regulations and any requirements under the *Public Health Act*.

Exportation of Remains

A death certificate is required for the exportation of human remains and a coroner's shipping certificate must be attached to the head of the casket. When cremated remains are to be shipped, a declaration is included along with the cremation certificate. Where overseas shipment is necessary, a copy of the burial permit and coroner's shipping certificate must accompany the body or cremated remains. Most established funeral homes are able to arrange for interprovincial and international transfers.

British Columbia:

The licensed funeral provider is required to display the current price list of goods and services which clearly states its effective date and the address of the funeral provider. All prices must be expressed as a fixed charge, an hourly rate, a rate per kilometer or some other unit of compensation. The price list also must include prices of goods such as caskets, urns, containers with model and manufacturer information. The price of embalming, facilities, professional and staff services, independent transfer services, funeral coach or other vehicles, and documentation and other disbursement costs must be itemized.

There are approximately 420 licensed cemeteries in B.C. ranging from single gravesites to large commercial cemeteries. Costs vary from \$0 - \$2,000 for a gravesite. Interment charges, casket costs and other funeral services vary greatly from place to place. The following prices are rough averages and should be used for illustrative purposes only:

Adult Grave space charge	\$4,000
Child Grave space charge (up to age 3)	\$ 200
(Over age 3 the grave is the same price as adult)	
Casket – basic	\$ 185 - \$7,500
Cremated remains grave space	\$ 500
Interment charge (open and close grave)	\$ 600

Embalming charge	\$ 295
Wood shipping container	\$ 350
Shipping human remains (not cremated)	\$1,500 + actual cost of Airfare

Most remains are shipped by air as there are no longer any baggage cars on trains going to the U.S. from B.C. or the Yukon. Cremated remains should be shipped by air cargo. Following are the representative charges for shipment of remains by air as of May 2013 by United Airlines. (These are minimum premium commodity rates.):

Human Remains Shipping Charges (in U.S. dollars):

Vancouver to Philadelphia	\$639
Vancouver to Atlanta	\$628
Vancouver to Miami	\$628
Vancouver to New York (JFK)	\$639
Vancouver to Seattle	\$402
Vancouver to Chicago	\$492
Vancouver to Los Angeles (LAX)	\$402
Vancouver to San Francisco	\$402
Vancouver to Omaha	\$492
Vancouver to Denver	\$492

Cremated Remains Charges (in U.S. dollars):

Shipment of cremated human remains is often covered in minimum charges for freight service at approximately \$120.00 U.S. dollars plus \$23.00 U.S. dollars for fuel and security.

Yukon

Remains are usually brought to Whitehorse via automotive service rather than by air. Cases requiring autopsy are forwarded to Vancouver as per a joint agreement between the Yukon and B.C. Coroners Services.

Charges for preparation of remains for shipment outside the Territory including professional fees, embalming, wooden flight casket, and hermetically sealed liner (for international shipments) is approximately \$ 3,650.00. Currently, the nearest cremation facility is in the Vancouver area. The charge for cremation services including a basic plywood cremation casket is approximately \$ 3,000. Funeral homes charge approximately \$1.25 per kilometer for travel outside the Whitehorse area. Airlines charge approximately \$ 1.30 per pound plus surcharges for forwarding human remains to the final destination in Yukon. The current cost for a plot including opening and closing at Grey Mountain Cemetery, which is in Whitehorse, would be \$2,166.

Exhumation and Shipment

An operator must not exhume or disinter human remains until the operator receives a written request to do so from a person who has the right to control the disposition of remains and that request has been approved by appropriate authorities. If the human remains are those of a person who at death was known to have had an infectious or contagious disease or other disease dangerous to the public the operator gives written notice to and receives permission from the medical health officer for the municipality in which the cemetery or mausoleum is located.

An operator or funeral provider must not transport human remains after exhumation or disinterment until adequate safeguards to protect public health are taken with respect to the manner of shipping transport.

According to part 4 of the Cremation, Interment, and Funeral Services Act, any person claiming an interest may apply to the court for an order to allow or restrain an exhumation or disinterment, and the court must have regard to the rights of all persons having an interest and must, without limitation, give consideration to

- (a) the feelings of those related to or associated with the deceased, with particular regard to the spouse of the deceased if the spouse was living with the deceased at the time of death, or to a person who is living with the deceased as husband or wife for a continuous period of at least 2 years,
- (b) the rules, practice and discipline respecting exhumation and disinterment as followed by the religious faith of the deceased if the cemetery is operated by a religious institution,
- (c) any terms and conditions respecting exhumation or disinterment found in a contract of the interment of the deceased,
- (d) any reasonable directions given by the deceased before death respecting the place of interment, and
- (e) whether the request for a disinterment involves family hostility or a capricious change of mind.

Unless human remains are to be disinterred from one lot and interred in another lot in the same cemetery or mausoleum, a person who makes the request for the exhumation or disinterment of human remains must arrange and pay for the services of a funeral provider to receive the human remains from the operator after the lot has been opened.

The practices described above also apply to Yukon.

Autopsy

An autopsy is a medical procedure that consists of a thorough examination performed on a body after death, to evaluate disease or injury that may be present and to determine the cause and manner of a person's death.

The coroner or medical examiner has the legal authority to order an autopsy without the consent of the deceased person's family (next of kin). This may occur when there has been a sudden or unexpected death of a person not under the care of a doctor, car crash, drug overdose, poisoning, suicide, murder or other circumstances defined by law. If an autopsy is not required by law, it cannot be performed unless the deceased person's family gives permission. In this situation the person requesting the autopsy would be liable for all expenses.

Cases requiring autopsy in Yukon are forwarded to Vancouver as per a joint agreement between the Yukon and B.C. Coroners Services.

Funeral Homes

British Columbia

This [link](#) provides a list of members of the [Funeral Service Association of British Columbia](#).

Yukon

Yukon currently has one funeral home, the [Heritage North Funeral Home](#) in Whitehorse.