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## MINISTRY OF HEALTH & WELLNESS

### Guidelines for the Importation of Human Remains into Jamaica

These guidelines are intended primarily to guard against the risks to human health posed by fluids that may leak from containers carrying human remains that are being imported into Jamaica. They are based on Medical Standard Precautions to prevent exposure to infectious diseases carried in the blood and other body fluids.

These requirements are intended to protect the public as well as airline, airport and regulatory employees from potential exposure to blood and other body fluids during transportation, inspection, or storage of human remains. (i.e., the whole body or portion of the body of a deceased human being). They are also intended to protect from contamination and cross-contamination of cargo and other materials.

Regardless of the stated cause of death, pathogenic organisms that can cause disease could be present in the blood or other body fluids of a deceased person. Such pathogens include Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B virus, Hepatitis C virus, and others.

Human remains will only be admitted into Jamaica under the following conditions:

- ❖ The remains are cremated (Cremains) and it is contained in an urn or in other impervious container;
- OR
- ❖ The remains are properly embalmed and placed in:
  - (a) a hermetically sealed casket **if the cause of death is a quarantinable communicable disease** (i.e., including Ebola, Cholera, Diphtheria, Infectious

Tuberculosis, Plague, Yellow Fever, Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers, SARS, or Pandemic Influenza), or

(b) a leak-proof container **if the cause of death is anything other than a quarantinable communicable disease**

AND is accompanied by:

- A permit issued by the Medical Officer (Health) for the parish of entry
- A statement of assurance that the body was placed in a hermetically sealed casket (in the case of a quarantinable disease)

### **Requirements for importing human remains into Jamaica**

Prior to the importation of human remains, the consignee (a licensed funeral director, in the case of bodies), or the importer or representative must obtain a Permit from the Medical Officer (Health) in the parish of entry.

### **Permits may be obtained by:**

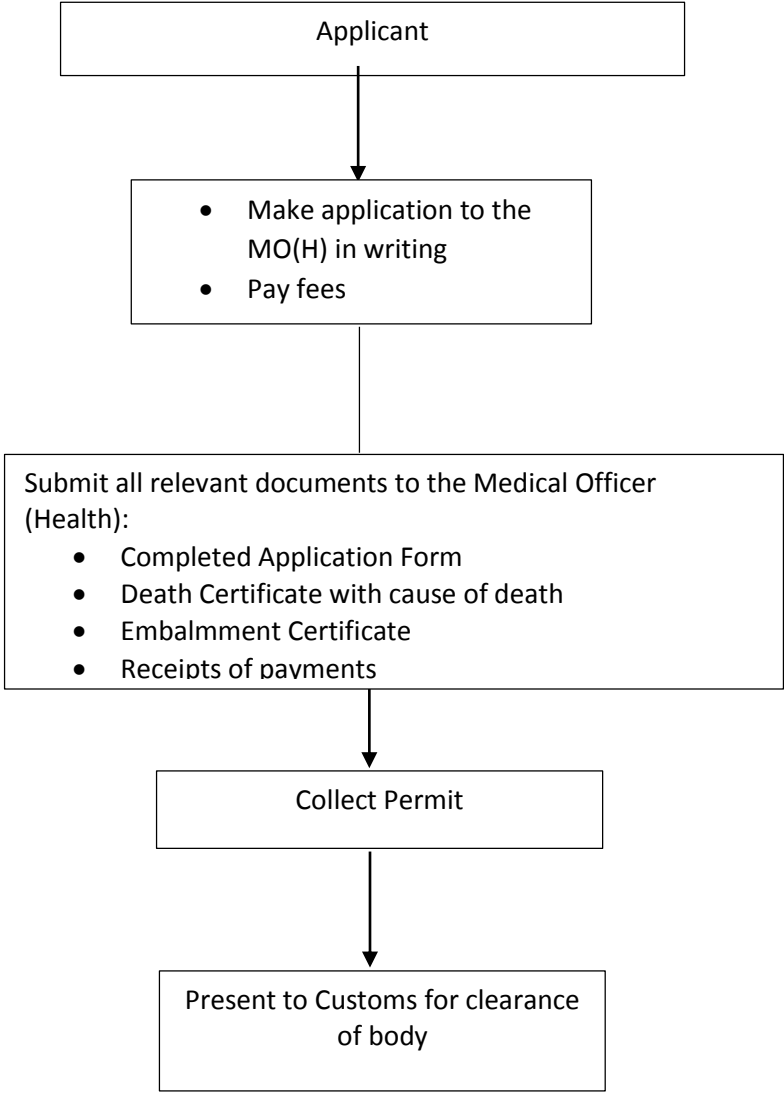
- Making an application in writing to the Medical Officer (Health) for the parish of entry, on the prescribed form which must be accompanied by:
  - (a) Copy of death certificate stating the cause of death
  - (b) Embalming Certificate (except in specific situations where embalming is prohibited for religious reasons)
  - (c) Cremation certificate (where applicable)
  - (d) Prescribed fees of \$10,000.00 or as prescribed from time to time by the Honorable Minister of Health

If the death certificate is in a language other than English, then it shall be accompanied by an English language translation.

The Medical Officer (Health) shall issue a permit setting out the conditions under which the remains may be admitted into Jamaica.

The Medical Officer (Health) may also require additional measures, including detention, disinfection, disinfestation, fumigation, or other related measures. This is if he/she has reason to believe that the human remains are, or may be infected or contaminated, and that such measures are necessary to prevent the introduction, transmission, or spread of communicable diseases into Jamaica.

**Flow Chart for obtaining Human Remains Transit Permit**



## **Notification of Arrival of Human Remains**

The Medical Officer (Health)/Chief Public Health Inspector and the Quarantine Officer should be notified by the airline/importer at least 24 hours prior to the arrival of imported human remains into the island (except for cremains which must be accompanied by the relevant documents). This notification should include:

- Airline name
- Flight Number
- Point of entry
- Date and Time of arrival
- Name of deceased

## **Transportation and Storage of Human Remains**

### **❖ On Aircraft**

The casket should be transported in an airtray or stored in a separate compartment from the regular luggage in the cargo hold.

### **❖ At Airport**

On arrival, human remains should be stored in an area separate from food, to await processing and collection.

Unclaimed Imported human remains should be appropriately stored at a licensed Funeral Establishment or Mortuary at the expense of the consignee/importer.

## **Disposal of unclaimed Human Remains**

Unclaimed Imported human remains should be appropriately disposed of in the following manner by the Customs Department:

- Place advertisement in at least 2 local media outlets giving notice of the intention to dispose of the remains.
- Make the necessary arrangements with the local Municipal Corporation for burial in a public cemetery.
- Legal proceedings may be considered for the recovery of expenses from the consignee/importer.

## Personal Protective Equipment

Cargo handlers and other workers who come in direct contact with the caskets should be provided with disposable gloves and masks.

## Definitions for Terms used in this Guideline

*Communicable disease:* An illness due to a specific infectious agent or its toxic products, which rises through transmission of that agent or its products from an infected person or animal or a reservoir to a susceptible host, either directly or indirectly through an intermediate animal host, vector, or the inanimate environment.

*Cremated remains (Cremains):* The residual matter after human remains are completely reduced to ash by intense heat.

*Cremation:* The act of reducing human remains to ash by intense heat.

*Death Certificate:* An official document that states the cause of death and is signed by a coroner, physician, or other official authorized to make a declaration of cause of death.

*Hermetically sealed casket:* A casket that is airtight and secured against the escape of microorganisms and strong odours. A casket will be considered hermetically sealed if accompanied by valid documentation that it has been hermetically sealed AND, on visual inspection, the seal appears not to have been broken.

*Interment:* The act of interring or preparing to inter human remains, as would typically occur in a grave, tomb, or other location.

*Leak-proof container:* A container that is puncture-resistant and sealed in a manner so as to contain all contents and prevent leakage of fluids during handling, storage, transport, or shipping.

*Quarantinable Communicable Disease:* Any of the communicable diseases listed includes cholera, diphtheria, infectious tuberculosis, plague, smallpox, yellow fever, viral hemorrhagic fevers (Lassa, Marburg, Ebola, Crimean-Congo, or others not yet isolated or named), severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and influenza caused by novel or re-emergent influenza viruses that are causing or have the potential to cause a pandemic.

*Standard Precautions* (formerly referred to as Universal Precautions): An approach to infection control in which all human blood and certain human body fluids are considered to be infectious for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis B virus, Hepatitis C virus, or other blood borne pathogens, and are handled accordingly.