AFDA Policy Statement

PROCEDURES FOR THE TRANSFER & TRANSPORT OF HUMAN REMAINS

Preamble

In 1993 a Committee was formed to investigate guidelines for interstate & intrastate transfer of human remains via air-freight. In 1994, it was decided that as a result of the funeral industry's present status of self-regulation, the AFDA as the professional authoritative organisation serving the industry, should establish and maintain its own procedures which it did in 1994.

In March 2005 the new Aviation Transport Security Act 2004 and associated Regulations 2005, under the management of the Federal Office of Transport Security, Department of Transport and Regional Services (DOTARS) were introduced. This legislation is compulsory from March 2007 and covers both international and domestic air-freight; previously only international air-cargo was regulated.

The National Legal and Governance Committee of AFDA and the AIE Board asked that the existing AFDA policy "Recommended Procedures for Intrastate & Interstate Transfer of Human Remains (via Air Freight)" be reviewed and revised appropriately so that a working policy document is produced that is not only compliant with the new aviation security legislation but covers all forms of transport of human remains that will be acceptable to AFDA, AIE, DOTARS, airlines and shipping agents.

Policy Statement

Any Member of the Association that fails to carry out their 'duty of care' in relation to these procedures shall have their actions investigated in accordance with the Association's By-laws to determine whether or not termination of membership or other appropriate action is warranted.

Procedures

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Adopted by National Council 26 October 2007
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VIA AIR

Under the new Aviation Transport Security Act and Regulations, ensuring compliance with this legislation rests with either an aircraft operator or a regulated air cargo agent (RACA) who must have:

- A transport security program (TSP) that sets out the measures and procedures in relation to the handling, storage and transport of cargo or to make arrangements for the movement of cargo, securely from acceptance until it reaches the cleared area or zone of a security controlled airport, or a prescribed aircraft, or another RACA.

- An outline of the objective of the TSP, including, by way of an accompanying document:
  
  (a) a statement outlining the local security risk context, including consideration of location, seasonal and operational factors; and
  
  (b) a list of general threats and generic security risk events to people, assets, infrastructure and operations; and
  
  (c) an outline of the people, assets, infrastructure and operations that need to be protected.

- Methods to ensure the security of cargo at all times and to prevent unauthorised persons from having access to cargo from the time it is dealt with by the measures set out in the program until the time it is delivered to the operator of a prescribed aircraft or to another RACA.

The current standard operating procedures for Australian Air Express (QANTAS) and Virgin Blue within Australia are provided as Appendices to these procedures.

International

In line with international shipping regulations the following procedures and documentation are required for the international transport of human remains as air freight:

- Embalming by US standard method.
- Use of hermetically sealed coffin or casket.
- Use of all wood outer shipping-container – wrapped or packaged, inclusive of absorbent material, in either a "custom-made carton", protective wrapping, felt or foam sheeting and suitably stitched and labelled
- Certified copy of death certificate.
- Locally issued burial and/or transit permit.
- Embalmers (non-contraband) affidavit – to be typed in funeral home letterhead.
- Shipper declaration for dangerous goods – if not embalmed.
- Non-contagious disease letter from local health authority – to be typed on letterhead of local authority or Coroner/Medical Examiner.
- Full flight itinerary, with name/address/phone number of consignee (quarantine clearance cannot be issued without this information).
- Australian passport.
- Next of kin information in Australia.

When arranging the flight details with an airline or RAGA, the funeral director must ensure that the coffin will be conveyed within the quickest possible time frame.
Domestic Intra and Interstate

The following procedures and documentation are required for the intra- and interstate transport of human remains as air freight:

Definitions
- **Consignor**: the funeral director charged to dispatch human remains.
- **Consignee**: the funeral director charged to receive human remains.
- **Transit Director**: the funeral director charged to receive and hold in transit, the human remains prior to transfer.

Consignor
- The human remains should be positively identified by a responsible person, where possible, or by body labels and mortuary records corroborated by at least two persons.
- Registration of death as applicable.
- Where possible the human remains are to be embalmed. If embalming is not possible, they are to be prepared to an accepted hygienic condition including lower jaw suture, washing of the body and shaving. Orifices should be clean and packed with cotton wool. The human remains should also be refrigerated at a temperature of 3-5 degrees Celsius for a minimum period of 24 hours prior to dispatch; and prior to placing remains in polyethylene bag and coffin.
- The body is to be hermetically sealed in a clear polyethylene bag, complying with a minimum standard thickness specification of no less than 0.26mm thickness using a heating iron taking care that no leakage of fluid takes place. Before sealing the polyethylene bag, excess air is to be extracted, thus ensuring that the sealing is hermetically effective.
- Where the body is not embalmed, the body is to be placed inside a second polyethylene bag with sufficient absorbent material between the inner and outer bag to absorb all fluids that may leak during transportation. The outer bag must be hermetically sealed.
- The standard of container used for shipment shall be of a standard no less than a flat lid coffin (shipping coffins of unpolished particle boards are acceptable). The coffin is to be fully trimmed internally. External mounting (except name plate) may be placed inside to avoid damage in transit.
- When arranging the flight details with an airline or RACA, the funeral director must ensure that the coffin will be conveyed within the quickest possible time frame, being aware to avoid extended delays at transit airport terminals. The appointed Association carrier refers to this mode of transport as "overnight first class". This is high priority freight. Delivery to the airport should be in strict compliance with airline time requirements arriving no sooner than time specified.
- Consignee (& Transit Director) is to be advised of airline, flight number, estimated arrival time, way bill number, dimensions of coffin and condition/treatment of body.
- The coffin is to be wrapped or packaged, inclusive of absorbent material, in either a "custom-made carton" or protective wrapping; or felt; or foam sheeting cover can also be Hessian; suitably stitched and labelled.
- A statutory declaration for the airline is to be completed stating that the body has been hermetically sealed and placed in a polyethylene bag, and that only the body has been placed in the coffin.
- An embalming certificate will accompany the consignment when the body has been embalmed.
- A "Shippers Declaration" for Dangerous Goods and a Medical Certificate of Cause of Death will accompany the consignment when the body has not been embalmed.

Consignee
- Meet aircraft at designated time of arrival.
- Effect transfer to receiving premises.
- Unpack and open coffin immediately.
- Open polyethylene tubing and inspect body.
- Effect refrigeration of un-embalmed body.
Transit Director

- Meet aircraft at designated time of arrival.
- Effect transfer to receiving premises.
- Effect refrigeration of un-embalmed body.
- Deliver to airport no sooner than time specified.
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VIA ROAD

Where the remains are to be transported by road to a destination that is more than an eight-hour journey from the consignor’s mortuary facility, the body must either be embalmed or otherwise transported in a refrigerated vehicle.

The policy for the transport of human remains via road is in accordance with Sections 6.5 - 6.9 of the Association's approved Standards for Premises, Equipment and Vehicles (PEV), viz.

6.5. Transfer Vehicle

Transfer vehicles must be suitable for the purpose for which they are used. They must be fitted with blinds, treated windows or suitable screening to ensure that vision into the body storage area is blocked from external view.

"The vehicle must be built so that the stretcher compartment is sealed and separate from the driving/passenger compartment” (refer page 12, section 2, 'Infection Control Guidelines for the Funeral Industry’ 1992 AFDA).

This can be achieved by installing either a fixed, sealed barrier between the driver and the compartment or installation of a portable fully enclosed capsule.

6.6. The transfer vehicle must contact at least the following:
   a. Disposable gloves
   b. Heavy duty gloves
   c. Protective over garments (torso and limbs)
   d. Overshoes (waterproof)
   e. Waterproof aprons
   f. Masks and eye goggles
   g. Disinfectant hand solution, paper towels and soap
   h. Ordinary laundry bags
   i. Plastic laundry bags (with ties) for blood contaminated linen
   j. Plastic ordinary waste bags (with ties)
   k. Plastic infectious waste bags (with ties)
   l. Disposable paper towels for cleaning
   m. Hypochlorite disinfectant solution
   n. Small first aid kit
   o. Packs of padding, plastic, etc, suitable for dressing wounds on bodies to prevent leakage
   p. Plastic sheeting for wrapping bodies and waterproof tape for the sealing of wrapped bodies
   q. Special containers for transporting babies


6.7. Dual Purpose Vehicle

Transfer vehicles may be used as hearses provided they meet the standards of section 6.4 above.

6.8. Hearses may be used as transfer vehicles, provided they meet the standards of 6.5 above.

6.9. Young Children – Transport

A funeral director may use for other purposes a station wagon or sedan type vehicle which has been used to transport the body of a stillborn child or a child under the age of three years.
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VIA RAIL

Where the remains are to be transported by rail to a destination that is more than a four-hour journey from the consignor's mortuary facility, it is recommended that the body be embalmed.

Consignor
The procedure for transfer via rail is to be in accordance with the one that is given earlier in the policy for the intra and interstate transport of human remains via air.

Consignee
- Meet train at designated time of arrival.
- Effect transfer to receiving premises.
- Unpack and open coffin immediately.
- Open polyethylene tubing and inspect body.
- Effect refrigeration of un-embalmed body.

Transit Director
- Meet train at designated time of arrival.
- Effect transfer to receiving premises.
- Effect refrigeration of un-embalmed body.
- Deliver to rail terminal no sooner than time specified.
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VIA SEA

Transfer of human remains from Tasmania to mainland Australia: TT-Line Company Pty Ltd Procedures

Following are the conditions under which Spirit of Tasmania will transport a deceased person, to be referred to as "Natural History Specimen"

- The deceased body can only be transported in a sealed coffin.
- The coffin must be capable of confining bodily discharge or infectious materials or contaminants.
- The vehicle transporting the coffin, must be an approved vehicle, which maintains the dignity of the deceased at all times (usually the coffin is not visible from outside the vehicle).
- The vehicle should be a hearse from a recognised and registered Funeral home.
- The vehicle must be accompanied by a driver nominated by the Funeral home.
- Normal passenger and accompanied vehicle rates will apply for the Driver and the vehicle.
- The driver of the vehicle must carry with them all necessary documentation to comply with the Burial and Cremation Regulations 2004.
- A note should be added to the SCR that the vehicle is carrying a "natural history specimen" and then refer to SCR pad grid.

Specific process for Victoria

Effective from July 2006, the Department of Human Services in Victoria has introduced a procedure in relation to the transport of human remains such that the Department will issue a clearance letter to the funeral director certifying that there are no objections to the removal of the remains from the State of Victoria. Although the letter is not a requirement under the Crematoria Act 2003, the Department has undertaken to issue these letters as a courtesy to funeral directors, should they be requested by an airline or a consulate.

The clearance letter will be issued by the Department provided ALL the following documents are presented to the Department:
- a formal letter of request from the funeral director (on firm's letterhead);
- embalming certificate;
- original death certificate or coroners death notice;
- statutory declaration by the funeral director, declaring the item to be transported is human remains;
- State coroner's certificate or medical certificate stating the deceased is free of infectious diseases; and
- in the case of cremated human remains, a statutory declaration from the funeral director declaring no knowledge of infectious diseases in the deceased, and a certificate of cremation.
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Appendix A
Australian Air Express (QANTAS)

Standard Operating Procedure No. S.O.P. 037

Carriage of Human Remains

Effective from: June 2007
Effective until: Further notice

References

S.O.P 016.
IATA Airport Handling Manual AHM 333 “Handling of Human Remains”.
AaE Freight Screening Process – Exemptions

Purpose

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (S.O.P.) is to ensure the safe and timely uplift of Human Remains to their final destination Port. This procedure documents the acceptance, identification and carriage of Human Remains on domestic services.

Human Remains MUST at all times be referred to as an “HUM” as this is an internationally approved airline code.

Authority

This S.O.P. has been produced under the Authority of the AaE Manager, Operational Compliance & Safety, to whom questions and comments should be directed.

Summary

Cremated and embalmed human remains may be accepted for carriage on all QF Domestic Flights (QF400+) providing all packaging and documentation requirements are met. Human remains can only be accepted on a separate consignment note and WILL NOT be accepted as part of a consolidated shipment.

Funeral Directors are required to pre-book space on the nominated flight. Where a trans-shipment is involved, the origin port MUST confirm that space is available ex the next port and book the HUM on the nominated flight including the arriving flight. Acceptance is on an Airport to Airport basis only.

Wherever possible, HUMs are to be booked on wide-bodied Aircraft for all Sectors where wide-bodied Aircraft availability is an option.
Uplift on B737 Aircraft

Where booking requests for Coffins require uplift on Sectors operated by B737 Aircraft, AaE MUST contact QF Special Handling (02 9304 7974) to advise of Booking and to ascertain that they do not hold bookings for disabled passengers with electric wheelchairs (these items require to be restrained in Compartment 1 and have loading priority over Coffins where bookings coincide) NB For B737-400 Aircraft NOT fitted with Aft Hold Sliding Carpet, an alternative Procedure for loading Coffins in the Aft Hold is an option.

AaE must supply 2 x approved restraint straps and 4 x Tie-Down Rings with each Coffin sent to Ramp for uplift on B737 Aircraft.

Coffins presented for uplift on B737 Aircraft MUST conform to the “Cargo Door Dimensions and Allowable Package Sizes” criteria documented in the Aircraft Loading Manual.

Packaging Requirements

CREMATED Human Remains must be shipped in funeral urns with cushioning materials and in a sealed outer box or case.

EMBALMED Human Remains must be shipped in an inner container enclosed in an outer wooden coffin or crate suitably prepared for transportation, ie inside a cardboard box or Hessian covering (so that the nature of it’s contents is not apparent) suitably stitched and labelled. The inner container must be hermetically sealed and of metal or of polythene plastic sheeting with a minimum thickness of 0.10in/0.254mm. In the latter case, the polythene container must have all excess air removed and both ends hermetically sealed with double welds.

The Outer wrapping, whether cardboard or other material MUST be plain, not previously used and free from irrelevant markings.

Uplift on B737 Aircraft

Outside packaging must conform to shape of Coffin contained within.

Outside packaging to contain a suitable number of Hand Holds (minimum 2 per side, preferably 3 per side) to assist with manual positioning inside Aircraft.

In inclement weather, AaE must provide plastic (as per perishable shipments) sufficient to protect the Coffin en-route to Ramp and to remain underneath during loading to ensure outer packaging does not hinder movement during the loading process.

The external package must be marked with the total weight.

Documentation

Human Remains must be accompanied by an official Death Certificate and a Non-Infectious and Embalming Certificate.
Declarations

In the case of Human Remains packed in inner polythene containers, the mortician must provide an officially certified written declaration to the effect that the casket containing the remains is metal lined and hermetically sealed or contains the remains in a polythene or plastic container of no lesser thickness than 0.010in/0.25mm and which is hermetically sealed.

The format of the Declaration is illustrated on the next page.

DECLARATION AS TO CASKETS CONTAINING HUMAN REMAINS

(Approved by Australian Funeral Director’s Association)

I, ........................................ Funeral Director ................................. of ........................................ in the state of ........................................ do solemnly and sincerely declare that the casket bearing the remains of the late ........................................ which is offered for carriage by Australian air Express from ........................................ to ........................................ is metal lined and hermetically sealed or contains the remains in a polythene or plastic container of no lesser thickness than 0.10in/0.25mm and which is hermetically sealed. And I make this solemn declaration by virtue of the Oaths Act 1900 conscientiously believing the statements contained herein to be true in every particular.

Declared before me

at.................................................................
in the state of................................................
This...........................................................Day
of..............................................................2
.................................................................J.P.

Ensure all parts of the Declaration are completed correctly, and maintain copies of documentation on file for a period of three (3) months.

Acceptance

All HUM movements are to be consigned as Overnight Service Level on individual General or Cash consignment notes.

Lodgement & Pick Up

Whenever possible it is preferred that both the lodgement and pick up process be conducted within the depot away from public viewing areas.

At all times an HUM is to be treated with respect and safe, careful handling procedures be employed.
Listing on Nominated Flight

When listing an HUM in the LPAD or Manual Manifest, the following points are to be adhered to, in order to ensure that all Personnel (Ramp Staff, Load Controller, Pilot-in-Command are aware of the nature of this item of Load):

- For Sectors operated by a wide-bodied Aircraft, HUMS to be loaded on a Pallet or ULD (not Bulk Hold), with NO other Freight types to be loaded on the Pallet or ULD.
- The Code SL is to be used to denote **Special Load**.
- The Free Format Comments section of the LPAD/Manifest MUST include HUM and either **COFFIN** or **CASKET** plus either Heavy or Bulky to alert Load Control and Ramp Staff to the nature of the item.
- These terms are also to be used when completing the LNCD or Manual **NOTOC** to alert Pilot-in-Command to the nature of the item.

The weight, service level, Barrow or ULD Number fields are to be completed as per S.O.P. 016.

An example of a completed LPAD Screen documenting an HUM movement is shown below:

Prepared by: Manager, Operational Compliance & Safety
Approved by: Executive General Manager, Operations
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Appendix B

Virgin Blue

Natural History Specimens/Human Remains

Human Remains (HUM) carried in coffins are sometimes referred to in the aviation industry and load messages as NHS (Natural History Specimens).

Assessment/Acceptance Process

Human remains will only be accepted/consigned from one funeral director to another funeral director. These booking will be for non-major freight flights only. Tranships must be booked and agreed to with the respective port freight managers prior to acceptance.

After delivery the funeral director will deliver the casket to the Virgin Blue Freight Shed or nominated area.

NHS will only be accepted/consigned from museums or research establishment to other museums or research establishments. They must be accompanied by paperwork establishing the bona-fides of the transport, quarantine paperwork (where applicable) and must be packed in a manner that precludes any cellular matter, fluid or gas escaping from the packaging.

HUM and NHS are required to be segregated (refer Dangerous Goods Charts and Tables).

Container Acceptance

HUM, except those cremated, must be contained in a lead- or zinc-lined coffin. The wooden coffin may be protected from damage by an outer packing and covered by canvas or tarpaulin so that the nature of its contents is not apparent.

Cremated remains in the form of ashes may be treated and handled as normal cargo and are not required to comply with IATA AHM333. They must be shipped in funeral urns which are efficiently cushioned by suitable packaging against breakage.

The container for NHS must have applicable packaging relating to the level of contagious or deleterious material carried. This may include inner and outer packaging similar to seafood packaging. NHS may be packaged with dry ice or other cooling/preservative agents which may require protection from other freight and the aircraft.