



AMBROSE AUSTRALIA
INTERNATIONAL REPATRIATIONS

INTERNATIONAL INFECTION CONTROL PROCEDURES

It is important that any movement of bodies should be coherent with International Health Regulations (IHR).

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has guidelines for the transport of human remains which state that cremated human remains pose no risk of infection and may be handled and loaded as normal cargo on an aircraft.

Otherwise, human remains must be contained in a hermetically sealed inner coffin of lead or zinc inside a wooden 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.

In order to transport human remains a death certificate is required, and the body must not be an infection risk.

If a permit for repatriation cannot be issued for the sole purpose of repatriating human remains, it is considered that cremation is the only viable option for such cases. This may not be acceptable to families for a variety of reasons, and burials is an option for these cases.

Inbound repatriation regulation for Australia states that human remains must be embalmed. Some issues remain around the transportation of those who die from, or with, infections. It is considered that the risk of infection from such a body, which is enclosed in a body bag and placed in a lined coffin, is negligible.

Furthermore, if such remains have been embalmed, the risk is even further reduced by the removal of blood and its replacement with a disinfectant solution. It is therefore the opinion of this committee that such remains should be considered free of infection and not subjected to specialist packaging rules.

Standard Precautions for infection prevention and control

The use of Standard Precautions involves following a recognised set of guidelines which have been developed to ensure the maximum protection of those who work in healthcare settings from exposure to infection. In the case of those working with deceased persons, the protection of the living is the priority.

Since it is not possible to rule out an underlying infection in every case, the use of Standard Precautions in the handling of all human remains is of utmost importance and is the most effective means of preventing the spread of infection.

Standard Precautions are based on the principle that all blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions (except sweat), non-intact skin and mucous membranes may contain transmissible infectious agents, and the following are the most effective means of diminishing the risk of infection from these:

- Thorough hand hygiene, following any contact with a body or the immediate environment around a body.
- Hands should be cleaned with liquid soap and running water, and dried thoroughly with a clean towel.

Alternatively, if hands are visibly clean, they may be decontaminated using an alcohol-based hand gel.

- Disposable gloves must be used in the handling of all bodies (Note: hand hygiene is still required on removing gloves).
- In the case of mortuaries and funeral parlours, additional protective clothing beyond that required for Standard Precautions must be provided and used at all times. This includes waterproof aprons, gowns, gloves, overshoes or Wellington boots and appropriate eye protection. Face and eye protection includes face shield, or surgical mask and goggles, or mask with eye shield
- Protective clothing should be removed after handling the body, disposed of appropriately, and hands washed thoroughly. Reusable personal protective equipment (PPE) should be cleaned and disinfected after each use in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Spillages must be dealt with immediately after they occur.
- Sharp instruments and needles must be handled in accordance with the safety instructions to ensure the maximum protection from injury for those handling them.

For those working in the funeral industry, including funeral directors and embalmers, it is the responsibility of Ambrose Australia to ensure that training is provided in all of the following areas where appropriate:

- Standard Precautions
- Standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- Manual handling and lifting Training must be certified, and records of training must be kept.

Training should be provided at induction, and it should also be provided in the event of a transfer or change of task and when new work equipment, systems of work or new technology is introduced. Training should be repeated periodically, as per the relevant legislation.

It is the responsibility of Ambrose Australia to ensure that this applies to all staff, including external contractors, eg: maintenance workers, funeral directors, embalmers.

Ambrose Australia International Repatriations is an Australian, family owned and operated company that specialises in global repatriation solutions and is available 24-hours, 7-days-a-week, 365-days-a-year to cater for all global time zones.

Email : repats@ambroseaustralia.com

For urgent matters call Mark Mills on +61 459 300 316.