



*executive committee of
the directing council*

PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

*working party of
the regional committee*

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



54th Meeting
Washington, D. C.
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Item 11 of the Agenda

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ORIGINAL: SPANISH

INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION OF HUMAN REMAINS

REPORT
OF THE
WORKING GROUP

The Working Party composed of the Representatives of Jamaica (Dr. C. C. Wedderburn), Mexico (Dr. Manuel B. Márquez Escobedo), and Venezuela (Dr. Daniel Orellana), to which the Executive Committee at its Third Plenary Session held on 19 April 1966 had entrusted the examination of the Draft Standards for the international transportation of human remains and the observations Governments had submitted thereon, met on 20 April at 12:30 p.m. Dr. John C. Cutler, Deputy Director of PASB, also attended the meeting.

The Working Party made a detailed examination of the Draft Standards prepared by the Experts Committee (which are to be found on pages 7-11 of Annex I of Document CE54/6) and the observations submitted by various Governments. During the examination other observations were made and, finally, it was agreed to prepare a revised text which will embody all the observations accepted. This new text, which is given below, is submitted to the consideration of the Executive Committee. If it is accepted by them, it could be forwarded to the Pan American Sanitary Conference for consideration and approval.

DRAFT STANDARDS

DECLARATION

The greater ease of communications today and the considerable increase in tourism make the international transportation of human remains a matter of practical interest that justifies the establishment of uniform standards.

The international transportation of human remains should be simplified so as not to increase the problems of the families with complicated and unnecessary procedures that appear to overlook the moral and social considerations involved in such cases.

It is possible to simplify the administrative procedures involved in obtaining authorization for the international transportation of human remains if it is borne in mind that, contrary to a deep-rooted opinion, a corpse does not constitute a health risk even when death was due to a quarantinable or communicable disease, since its power to infect disappears when it is suitably embalmed.

Embalming might become the general practice in the countries of the Americas since it is the most appropriate method of preserving human remains; however, this in no way implies that other, simpler, and equally effective methods, cannot also be used.

Definitions

Article 1. International transportation of human remains is understood to be the shipment of the body from the country where the death occurred to the country of its final destination after either death or disinterment.

Article 2. The transportation of bodies between frontier districts within 48 hours after death shall not be subject to these standards.

Article 3. For the purpose of these standards an impervious coffin shall be any container or box, of whatever material, which can be hermetically sealed and so maintained by plastic or rubber gasket or by metal or similar material which has been soldered or welded. The body may also be encased in a plastic container which has been sealed by heat or by adhesive materials prior to being placed in a non-impervious coffin.

Documentation

Article 4. For international transportation of human remains, the following documents shall be required:

- a. An official certificate of cause of death issued by the local registrar of death, or similar authority;

- b. A statement by the person authorized to prepare the remains, certified by an appropriate authority, indicating the manner and method in which the body was prepared and indicating that the coffin contains only the body in question and necessary clothing and packing;
- c. A transit permit stating the surname, first name, and age of the deceased person, issued by the competent authority for the place of death, or the space of burial in the case of exhumed human remains, and
- d. Copies of the documentation required under subparagraphs a, b, and c shall accompany the shipment of remains. The outside of the coffin should bear an immovable plaque or other appropriate marking, in a conspicuous place, indicating name, age, and place of final destination of the body.

Health Measures

Article 5. The human remains shall be subject to the following measures:

- a. Thorough washing with an effective disinfectant; disinfection of all orifices; packing of all orifices with cotton saturated with an effective disinfectant; wrapping in a sheet saturated with an effective disinfectant; and placing in an impervious coffin; or
- b. Proper embalming (arterial and cavity) and placement in an impervious coffin.

Shipment Requirements

Article 6. Human remains prepared for international shipment must be placed in an impervious coffin. Where the cause of death was a quarantinable disease, as defined in the International Sanitary Regulations, the human remains must be embalmed (arterial and cavity) and placed in an impervious coffin.

The impervious coffin must thereupon be hermetically sealed and may be shipped without any other covering (except in the case of shipment by sea), or for protective purposes may be fitted in a wooden box, or one made of other material, so as to prevent movement; or may be wrapped in a specially designed fabric.

Transportation by land, air and sea

Article 7. The following regulations shall apply to the transportation by rail:

- a. The impervious coffin may be transported in the baggage compartment of a passenger car.

- b. Each country shall be responsible for fixing the time limit within which the body must be removed at its final destination.

In case of transportation by road the impervious coffin must be conveyed preferably on a closed hearse or failing such, in an ordinary closed van (truck) or automobile, placed in such a way as to prevent movement.

The impervious coffin may be conveyed also in the baggage compartment of a passenger aircraft or in a cargo aircraft and may be equipped with a vent or safety valve provided that precautions are taken to prevent the escape of liquids or nauseous gases.

In case of transportation by sea the impervious coffin, in order to preclude movement, must be packed in an ordinary wooden case, or one made of other material, or may be placed in a specially designed fabric container.

Common Provision

Article 8. Regardless of the mode of transportation, wreaths, flowers, and other similar funeral articles may be sent with the coffin only when it is permitted by the provisions in force in the country to which it is being sent.

Final Provisions

Article 9. The above formalities may be reduced either through bilateral agreements or by joint decision in particular cases.

Article 10. The transportation of remains exhumed after the period established in the local provisions in force have elapsed, and the transportation of ashes, shall not be subject to health or other special measures.