



British Embassy
Manila

CONSULAR SECTION

THE BRITISH EMBASSY
120 Upper McKinley Road, McKinley Hill
Taguig City 1634
Metro Manila
Philippines

Telephone: +632 858 2200

Facsimile: +632 858 2342

Email: Cons.Manila@fco.gov.uk

Website: www.ukinthephilippines.fco.gov.uk

INFORMATION SHEET RELATING TO DEATHS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The death of a relative or a friend can be a traumatic experience. When the death occurs overseas, family and friends in the UK can feel additional distress as they are unfamiliar with foreign procedures, and perhaps they are unable to communicate in the language of the country where the death occurred. The Consular Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and our Embassy in Manila are ready to help as far as they can. You may be uncertain about what to do next or who to contact for advice. These notes are designed to help you through the practical arrangements you will need to make. You should be aware that Philippine procedures may differ greatly to those in the United Kingdom and that, while we understand your need for arrangements to be made quickly, this is not always possible.

The information contained in this document is not meant to be a definitive statement of the law, nor is it to be taken as a substitute for independent legal advice.

Autopsies (Post Mortems)

An autopsy is mandatory for any foreign national whose cause of death cannot be readily determined. An authority to perform an autopsy is normally required from next-of-kin. Autopsies may, however, be performed without authority if the deceased died of a violent death. Autopsies are carried out in a funeral parlour. A medico-legal doctor from the Philippine National Police (PNP) conducts the autopsy. Tissue samples of internal organs are taken and brought to PNP Crime Laboratory in Camp Crame for examination. When the autopsy is completed, the funeral parlour will embalm the body (after fluids and blood are drained) and then inject formalin. The autopsy results are available 2-3 weeks later, on request. The results are not required for the funeral. A body can normally be released for burial, cremation or repatriation once the autopsy is complete.

Hospital Facilities

If a person dies in a hospital, their body may be taken to a funeral home/parlor for embalming straight away. This is because some hospitals and funeral homes do not have cold storage for bodies.

Mortuary Facilities

Mortuary facilities are available in most key cities and small towns throughout the Philippines. Crematoriums are located mostly in Metro Manila, but there are cremation facilities available in Cebu, Davao, Baguio City and San Fernando (in La Union). The standards applied in Philippine morgues are not always on a par with those in the UK. For instance, not all mortuaries have refrigeration facilities. For this reason, public health concerns compel funeral homes to immediately apply formalin/embalm the remains; or the remains may be put into steel coffins to prevent the leaking of bodily fluids. However, some funeral parlours may wrap the bodies in a special procedure to avoid leakage, and then use ordinary wooden coffins. These coffins would cost much less than steel ones, and also weigh less in cases of repatriation.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office holds and uses data for purposes notified to the Information Commissioner under the Data Protection Act 1998 (which may be viewed at www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk). Such personal data may be disclosed to other UK Government Departments and public authorities.

Some mortuaries only accept payment in local currency (Philippine pesos). If you pay for a casket prior to a cremation, you should check whether you have paid for it outright or only on loan, in which case it will have to be returned to the mortuary after the cremation. You should also be aware that some crematoriums have a limited range in size of urns.

Mortuaries also have limited size range of caskets/coffins, and often use imported or custom-made ones for foreigners (due to their larger size), which are a lot more expensive.

There are many reputable funeral homes in the Philippines, and they normally offer a range of packages that include the costs for embalming, viewing, flowers, food for visitors, etc. Sometimes an e-vigil (viewing the funeral service live electronically) is also offered at little or no additional expense. You should enquire with the funeral home about the package that suits your requirements.

Be aware that there are also funeral homes that are less scrupulous and charge unreasonable fees. Ask for a breakdown of what you are paying for. Consular staff can speak with the funeral home to enquire about these fees and convey your concerns.

Burial, Cremation and Repatriation

Following the death of a British national in the Philippines, the next of kin (NOK), or their formally appointed representative, must decide whether to –

- a) Have a local burial or cremation,
- b) Repatriate the deceased to the UK, or
- c) Have a local cremation and then repatriate ashes back to the UK

Consular staff in London will pass on to the British Embassy in the Philippines the wishes of the next of kin about the funeral or cremation of the deceased, and also details of who is taking responsibility for the costs incurred. We will do our best to ensure these wishes are carried out. We therefore recommend that you make a decision about the deceased's funeral and cremation as soon as possible.

Traditionally, a wake is held while awaiting the burial date of the deceased. This is a common Philippine practice where the remains are displayed for viewing of family and friends. Please note there are fees incurred for this, you may want to discuss duration of the wake with the funeral parlour.

If the NOK is outside of the Philippines, a written authorisation must be issued by NOK for anyone to transact regarding the funeral/cremation/burial arrangements. This may be sent via email to the embassy (through consular staff).

A body can normally be released for burial, cremation or repatriation once the autopsy is complete. Burial in a public plot in the Philippines usually includes a 5-year contract. If the contract is not renewed, then the remains are exhumed and placed in a common grave, and the space is declared vacant for reoccupation.

Repatriation of human remains to UK or elsewhere is expensive. The main expense is airfreight from Manila, plus local handling costs, packaging, permits, etc. The cheapest and most practical option is cremation and repatriation of the ashes. If you decide on cremation, please note that urns available from Philippine undertakers are quite small. A straightforward cremation and repatriation will usually take 2-3 working days to arrange. It may be necessary for family and/or friends to appoint an international undertaker in the UK (see Annex G). Some UK undertakers, e.g. Rowland Brothers Intl. (<https://rowlandbrothersinternational.com/>) or Kenyon International (<http://www.kenyoninternational.com/>), have Philippine counterparts in Manila that deal with repatriation requests.

If the deceased had travel insurance, it is important that next of kin (NOK) immediately contact the insurance company. If there is no insurance cover, the costs of burial, cremation or repatriation will need to be met by family and/or friends.

Neither the British Embassy in Manila, nor the FCO, has any budgets to meet these costs.

Here are the usual requirements for repatriation of remains (the British Embassy has no involvement in this process):

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Certified copy of Death Certificate
2. Passport (copy will suffice)
3. Municipal Transfer Permit
4. Quarantine permit issued by Bureau of Quarantine, 25th and A.C. Delgado Streets, Port Area, Manila (not applicable if remains are cremated)
5. Body must be in a hermetically-sealed container (following international standards) protected by fumigated wooden crate for shipment
6. Fumigation certificate

Here are the usual requirements for repatriation of ashes (the British Embassy has no involvement in this process):

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Certified copy of Death Certificate
2. Passport (copy will suffice)
3. Municipal Transfer Permit
4. Cremated remains must be in an urn (following international standards)

OPTIONAL REQUIREMENTS:

1. Autopsy / Post-mortem reports, if the deceased died of mysterious circumstances or communicable disease
2. Hospital report
3. Police report

Registration of the death

A Philippine death certificate is written in English. The certificate shows the deceased's complete name, his/her nationality, religion, marital status, age, address at time of death, cause(s) of death, informant, relationship to informant and how the body is treated after the death e.g. cremation, local burial, etc. A municipal death certificate can usually be obtained within one week, except where there is only a presumption of death, where it can then take several years. However a certified copy from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) can be obtained usually only after three months.

In cases of a major disaster with significant loss of life, the Philippine authorities may speed up the issue of a death certificate, even though no body was recovered, but this does not happen automatically.

If hospital bills or funeral parlor bills are outstanding, the Philippine authorities are very unlikely to issue a death certificate, until these bills have been paid.

Return of Personal Effects

Personal effects are normally returned to next of kin, or their authorised representative, without any formalities. If personal effects need to be returned to the UK and next of kin are not present in Philippines, the Embassy can assist with making arrangements by commercial means.

Police / Judicial Inquiries

The Embassy can liaise with the Philippine National Police (PNP) and local courts, if action relating to a death of British national is required. In the case of a suspicious or violent death, the police will carry out an investigation and, if they are satisfied that a crime has been committed, may take a suspect into custody.

The suspect will be brought before the City or Provincial Prosecutor. If the Prosecutor determines that there is a case to answer (also referred to as 'probable cause'), the suspect will be remanded in jail for trial, but those remanded for all but the most serious offences are eligible for bail. Trials are conducted before a Regional Trial Court judge sitting alone. Trials can be very slow and cumbersome, and in some cases can last several years. Families of the deceased can employ the services of a private prosecutor, who will work alongside and under the supervision of the government prosecutor and can sometimes speed the process up (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/philippines-list-of-lawyers>).

Legal Aid

If the deceased died under violent circumstances and a trial ensues, the family must work closely with the prosecutor to ensure that the case is not dismissed due to lack of interest, or failure to prosecute. It is often best to engage the services of a local lawyer who will work for your interests. Consular staff can enquire about hearings, but not interfere in the local judicial process.

Compensation

There is a Philippine compensation scheme for the compensation of dependants of murder victims for lost support, but the maximum pay out is £100. Applications should be addressed to the Department of Justice (<https://www.doj.gov.ph/>).

Passports of the Deceased

It is important that the passport of a deceased person is cancelled so that it cannot be used illegally. In the Philippines, you should send or hand in the original passport along with the following documents to the British Embassy in Manila.

- ✓ D1 Form
- ✓ Original death certificate
- ✓ LS01 Form – in case passport was declared lost or stolen

Pensions/UK bank accounts of the Deceased

If the deceased had any UK pension and/or bank accounts, it is up to the NOK to notify the authorities directly. The Embassy/FCO cannot assist with these processes, most of which require the NOK to make direct contact.