

# INFORMATION SHEET RELATING TO DEATHS IN HONG KONG

## How the British Consulate in Hong Kong can help you:

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 are unable to communicate in the language of the country where the death occurred. Consular Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and our Consulate in Hong Kong 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 Hong Kong procedures differ significantly 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.

## What we can do to help:

- Inform next of kin
- Offer advice on local procedures
- Provide a list of local funeral homes
- Provide information about transferring funds
- Advise how to apply for a UK style death certificate

## What we CANNOT do:

- Investigate an alleged crime
- Pay any hospital bills
- Pay cremation or repatriation costs
- Pay any outstanding debts
- Offer legal advice
- Store or send back to UK the deceased's personal effects
- Negotiate with insurance companies.

Please see our separate leaflets on coping with death abroad that are available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-death-abroad>

## **What you CAN do:**

- Provide us with as much information as possible about the deceased:
  - Full Name
  - Date of birth
  - Passport Number
  - Provide a copy of the passport if possible
  - Details of next of kin (if not you)
  - Address of deceased
- Get in touch with the insurance company
- Obtain a local death certificate – Please note that the local death certificate will not be issued immediately if the death resulted from unnatural causes, instead a ‘certificate of order authorising burial / cremation of body’ will be issued by the Coroner’s Court (see below for more details).

## **Information on Death Procedures**

### **Documents required for dealing with local authorities in Hong Kong**

- Your passport(s)
- The Hong Kong Police and/or Coroner may request some proof of your relationship with the deceased. This usually means the long form birth or marriage certificate. If you do not have access to these documents, please talk to our consular staff in Hong Kong for further advice. To apply for a certified copy of UK birth or marriage certificates - <http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>
- If you are not the Next of Kin, please obtain an authorisation letter from Next of Kin, copy of Next of Kin’s passport and proof of relationship between the Next of Kin and the deceased.

### **Autopsies (Post Mortems)**

An autopsy will not normally be carried out on deaths resulting from natural causes. In cases where the death resulted from unnatural causes (e.g. poison, violence, etc) the case will be referred to a coroner and an autopsy and investigation will then take place. The investigation which usually takes about 6 to 12 months will be conducted by the police under the direction of the Coroner who will then decide whether to hold an inquest into the cause of death. A body can normally be released for burial, cremation or repatriation once the autopsy is complete. A ‘Certificate of Order Authorising Burial/Cremation of Body’ will be issued by the Coroner Court for this purpose. The address of the Coroner Court is: - 10/F, Eastern Law Courts Building, 29 Tai On Street, Sai Wan Ho, Hong Kong. Tel: 2886 6870 and 2886 6871. Fax: (852) 2568 1735.

For deaths reported to the Coroner, the death will be registered at the Death Registrar and a death certificate will only be available after the Coroner has concluded his inquiry of the death. The Death Registrar will then write to the Next of Kin explaining that they can submit an application for a death certificate. The Birth & Deaths General Office is at 3rd Floor, Lower Block, Queensway Government Office, 66 Queensway. Tel: 2867 2784, website:

[www.immd.gov.hk/ehhtml/bdmreg\\_3htm](http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehhtml/bdmreg_3htm). If for some special reasons the Next of Kin requires a document to certify the fact of death of the Deceased before a death certificate is available; he/she may apply to the Coroner's Court directly for a 'Certificate of the Fact of Death'.

Pathologists are empowered by law to remove organs for further examination if necessary and no consent is needed from the relatives. In practice, however, the removal of organs for preservation and further examination usually only takes place if absolutely necessary, and relatives would be informed of the procedures.

Organs will be returned to the relatives for burial/cremation, normally within two to three weeks, together with the deceased body subject to their wish. If the relatives do not want to have the organs back, the Department of Health would arrange respectful disposal of the organs by incineration. They do not keep organs for period longer than that needed for examination to ascertain the cause of death.

The family may request a copy of the autopsy from the Coroner's Office although this may take a few months.

## **Mortuary Facilities**

There is a morgue in every public hospital in Hong Kong including three public mortuaries based in Kwai Chung, Victoria, and Fu Shan. The place of death determines which mortuary the body is taken to. If a person dies in hospital then the body stays in the hospital morgue until it is transferred to a funeral parlour. If a person dies at home or in a car accident, the body is taken to one of the three public mortuaries. The standards applied, for example in relation to storage temperature, are on a par with UK morgues.

The three public Mortuaries:-

Victoria Public Mortuary  
34 Victoria Road, Kennedy Town, Hong Kong  
Tel: 2817 2026 / Fax 2818 4859

Kwai Chung Public Mortuary  
100 Kwai Hei Street, Kwai Chung, NT, Hong Kong  
Tel 2612 5810 / Fax: 2419 0709

Fu Shan Public Mortuary  
10 Yau On Street, Shatin, NT, Hong Kong  
Tel: 2606 9333 / Fax: 2691 1112

## **Repatriation and Burial**

The next of kin or family and friends with written authorisation from the next of kin should arrange the repatriation of the body through an international funeral director.

Local burial or cremation is possible and should be arranged with a local funeral parlour. You may however, have to wait a few weeks for a cremation due to the lack of crematoriums in Hong Kong.

If the deceased is to be cremated in Hong Kong, the next of kin may approach the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department at the Cemeteries and Crematoria Office, <http://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/cc/index.html>. With the certificate of the fact of death, the

certificate of cremation and the removal permit of the urn; the ashes can then be transported back to the UK via a local funeral parlour, who will make all the necessary arrangements.

Burial and cremation costs can be quite expensive in Hong Kong. Below is an example of prices as of July 2015.

### **Burial / Cremation Costs**

Cost of a local funeral (inc. all charges such as undertaker's fees, cost of religious service, documents but not tombstone)	\$28,000
Total cost of cremation and transportation of ashes back to the UK	\$26,000 – 30,000
Cost of preparing and transporting a body to the UK (also depends on weight of body)	\$50,000 - \$55,000

### **List of Funeral Directors in Hong Kong**

The following list of funeral directors has been prepared by the British Consulate-General **Hong Kong** for the convenience of British Nationals who may require this service and assistance in **Hong Kong**. It is provided on the understanding that we (the British Consulate-General) do not assume or undertake any legal responsibility, to you, or those affected, if you choose to take it into account when instructing a local funeral director.

Further and alternatively, we cannot accept any liability to any person or company for any financial loss or damage arising from the use of this information or from any failure to give information.

Our aim is to provide our customers with as much relevant information to enable them to make better informed decisions but our lists **are not recommendations and should not be treated as such.**

#### **Universal Funeral Parlour**

10 Cheong Hang Road, Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Tel: 2362 4331

Fax: 2774 5546

Website: [www.universalfuneralparlour.com.hk](http://www.universalfuneralparlour.com.hk)

Email: [info@universalfuneral.com.hk](mailto:info@universalfuneral.com.hk)

- they have English speaking staff
- they have experience of representing British nationals

#### **Hong Kong Funeral Home**

679 King's Road, North Point, Hong Kong

Tel: 2561 5226 (24 hour hotline)

2563 0241

Fax: 2811 4891

Website: [www.hongkongfuneralhome.com](http://www.hongkongfuneralhome.com)

Email: [info@hongkongfuneralhome.com](mailto:info@hongkongfuneralhome.com)

- they have English speaking staff
- they have experience of representing British national

### **Kowloon Funeral Parlour**

1A Maple Street, Tai Kok Tsui, Kowloon West, Hong Kong

Tel: 6996 2992

Fax: 2380 3314

Website: [www.kowloonfuneral.hk](http://www.kowloonfuneral.hk)

Email: [info@kowloonfuneral.com](mailto:info@kowloonfuneral.com)

• they have English speaking staff

**Please note that an inquest will not take place in the UK if a local burial or local cremation has taken place.**

### **Registration of the death**

The Hong Kong Government will issue a local death certificate citing the cause of death in the English language. If there has been an autopsy on the body the local death certificate is likely to take 6-12 months. This local death certificate will be accepted in the UK.

### **To register the overseas death of British citizen**

You can find the information at this link: - [https://www.gov.uk/register-a-death/y/overseas/hong-kong/same\\_country](https://www.gov.uk/register-a-death/y/overseas/hong-kong/same_country)

You do not have to do this, but it means:

- the death will be recorded with the General Register Offices (for England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and the National Records Office of Scotland
- you can order a consular death registration certificate

### **Passport cancellation of a deceased person**

It is important that the passport of a deceased person is cancelled so it cannot be used illegally. Please contact the nearest British Embassy / Consulate if outside the United Kingdom or contact Her Majesty's Passport Office in the UK to send or hand in this passport with a copy of the death certificate along with a D1 form

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-with-a-passport-when-the-passport-holder-has-died>. The cancelled passport will be returned to the next of kin or disposed of safely on his/her behalf.

If the passport of the deceased is lost or unavailable, please complete form LSO1 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-a-lost-or-stolen-passport-form-ls01>

### **Return of Personal Effects**

Personal effect under the value of HK\$5000 is normally returned to the next of kin, or their authorised representative without any formalities. However, if the value is higher than HK\$5000, the next of kin, or their authorised representative will have to apply for the personal effects through the Probate Registry of the High Court, LG3, High Court Building,

38 Queensway, Hong Kong. Tel: (852) 2840 1683. Fax: 852 2524 7737. This can take from 3 to 9 months.

## **Police/Judicial Inquiries**

In the case of suspicious death or a road traffic accident, the Police (or the Traffic Police, as appropriate) in the district in which the death occurred will lead an investigation. Once the investigation and report is complete, the report will be forwarded to the Department of Justice to decide what charges will be brought against the defendant. As soon as a decision has been made about charges, the police will start prosecution procedures and a copy of the full investigation report is sent to the Coroner's Court. Family can request a copy of the investigation report from the Coroner's Court, at 10/F, Eastern Law Court Building, 29 Tai On Street, Sai Wan Ho, Hong Kong. Tel: (852) 2886 6870 and (852) 2886 6871. Fax: (852) 2568 1735.

The defendant will be given a date to attend a court hearing and a court trial will usually take place a few months later. Once the Judge has reached a verdict, the defendant can submit an appeal and this can sometimes be a lengthy wait. Usually the defendant will be freed on bail.

## **Compensation**

### **Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation (CLEIC)**

The aim of this scheme is to provide cash assistance both-to those who are injured, disabled or killed as a result of a crime of violence and to those who are accidentally injured, disabled or killed by a law enforcement officer using a weapon in the execution of his duty and their dependants in cases of death in both situations. The scheme is non-means tested. Payments under the scheme are to be made from public funds.

The scheme is administered by two Boards, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and the Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation Board. Appointments to the Boards are made by the Chief Executive. The Secretariat to the Boards is provided by the Social Welfare Department, which is also responsible for the assessment and payment of compensation.

This scheme is applicable to Hong Kong residents as well as foreign nationals whose stay in Hong Kong is legal.

For further information, please contact:-

The Secretary

Criminal and Law Enforcement Injuries Compensation Boards

Room 703

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Wu Chung House

213 Queen's Road East

Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Tel: (852) 2892 5220

Fax: (852) 2575 7938

Email: [cleiceng@swd.gov.hk](mailto:cleiceng@swd.gov.hk)

Website: [www.swd.gov.hk](http://www.swd.gov.hk) or [http://www.police.gov.hk/ppp\\_en/04\\_crime\\_matters/cvc.html](http://www.police.gov.hk/ppp_en/04_crime_matters/cvc.html)

## **Other help and advice on bereavement:**

- Your family doctor
- Your local social services in the UK
- Samaritans (00 44 (0)8457 909090) [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)
- Victim Support (00 44 (0)845 3030990) [www.victimsupport.com](http://www.victimsupport.com)
- CRUSE Bereavement Care (00 44 (0)870 167 1677) [www.crusebereavement.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavement.org.uk)
- The Compassionate Friends (00 44 (0)8451 232304) [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)
- FCO Publication – Guide for bereaved families  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coping-with-death-abroad>

## **Practical Tips / Advice**

- If you are a friend/colleague of the deceased you will need a Power of Attorney from the Next of Kin authorising you to deal with all the matters related to the deceased. The Next of Kin can obtain this from any UK solicitor office.
- In the event of the body of the deceased being repatriated back to the UK, the next of kin or the UK contact should liaise with a UK undertaker to ensure all necessary steps are taken care prior to the arrival of the body of the deceased in the UK.

## **Media Handling**

The British Consulate and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London will not release information on a deceased British National to the press, unless asked to do so specifically by the Next of Kin. Some deaths overseas (especially those that occur in unusual circumstances or accidents/murders) will attract media attention. If you are contacted by media reporters and are not happy to deal with them yourself, you should ask them to contact the FCO. Any media inquiries made to the FCO will be directed to our press office, where a dedicated team handles such matter.