

## 7 FAM 220

# NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING OF DEATHS OF U.S. NATIONALS ABROAD

*(CT:CON-158; 02-13-2007)*  
*(Office of Origin: CA/OCS/PRI)*

## 7 FAM 221 SUMMARY

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a. The Bureau Consular Affairs (CA) has a statutory obligation to make notifications of death. Notification by traveling companions, employers, and others does not relieve the CA of the responsibility of **officially** informing the closest relative to ensure that all proper notification has been made and that all available information has been disseminated.
- b. Consular officers generally do not have a professional background in social work, spiritual counseling, mental health or criminal investigation. Nevertheless, we work very closely with families in some of the worst moments of their lives. How we do this work is a very important element in the recovery of these families. Death notification is among the most unpleasant and uncomfortable tasks a consular officer undertakes.
- c. Performing notifications can be physically and emotionally exhausting. Expressing the right words, understanding families' emotions, and responding with empathy are paramount. The attitude, demeanor, professionalism, and sensitivity of consular officers projected during a notification are critical. The delivery of a notification can remain etched in a family member's memory forever.

**Bereaved families will always remember you . . . what you said and how you said it.**

- d. Notification of the death abroad of a U.S. citizen is designed to inform the closest relative of the deceased, partner or legal representative as gently and sympathetically as possible of the death and to provide information essential for making a decision about the disposition of the remains. The consular officer must ascertain that the proper person is notified and that the wishes of the next of kin for the disposition of the remains are carried out. This subchapter provides guidance regarding how to notify the next of kin of the death of a U.S. citizen/national abroad and requirements for reporting deaths to CA/OCS/ACS. The subchapter also delineates those

**death cases for which consular officers are not responsible** for providing death notification to next of kin (NOK) and reporting to the Department and who has that responsibility.

**See:**

- 7 FAM 200 Appendix E Identifying NOK or Legal Representative (under development).
- 7 FAM 230 regarding Death From Non Natural Causes
- 7 FAM 280 regarding presumptive death

## **7 FAM 222 MEANS OF NOTIFICATION**

### **7 FAM 222.1 In Person Notification**

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a. Unless the next of kin (NOK) is present abroad, consular notification of death is **not** generally done in person.
- b. **What Experts Recommend:** Grief and bereavement specialists advise that the most humane method of notifying a person of the death of a loved one is to do so in person. The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) very much respects these recommendations and we strive to impart the lessons learned by consular officers, grief and bereavement specialists and families in our training and guidelines for consular officers. Unfortunately, time and distance generally make it impossible for us to perform death notifications in person.
- c. **Local Police Assistance in Unusual Cases:** We have explored partnering with U.S. law enforcement authorities and asking police to go to the home of a family when a death notification is being made by phone from a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. This has not proved to be feasible in most cases. It can be very helpful when the person to be notified is elderly or when the death was the result of an act of violence. CA/OCS/ACS can work with posts to try to arrange this or posts can try contacting the local police Department directly. Consular officers calling from U.S. embassies and consulates abroad would do the actual death notification, but local police in the hometown in the United States could, in theory, be on hand in the event the family required some immediate assistance and support, in particular emergency medical care. CA/OCS Victim Assistance Specialists may also be helpful in coordinating with local victim assistance service providers.
- c. **Death of a Hostage:** In the event of the death of a hostage, initial notification may be done by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

Victim Assistance Specialists, but consular officers should follow up and assist families. (See 7 FAM 1820).

## 7 FAM 222.2 Telephone Notification

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a, Posts should make every attempt initially to notify the NOK of a death abroad of a U.S. citizen by telephone.
- b. Make the initial telephone call primarily to notify the NOK of the death, its cause and/or circumstances, and to alert the NOK that more detailed information will follow in a faxed or e-mailed message. It is usually unproductive to attempt to relay detailed information concerning disposition of remains by telephone. The NOK may be in a highly emotional state or in shock and may not remember everything the consular officer is explaining.
- c. **Show Compassion:** Take care that the initial telephone call to the NOK is made with tact and sympathy.
  - (1) A good procedure to follow is to begin the conversation by carefully identifying yourself by name and as an official with the U.S. embassy/consulate in [country or city], and stating that you have bad or distressing news concerning the relative or friend.
  - (2) This gives the person called a few moments to prepare emotionally for what is to follow. The news should then be broken with an expression of sympathy.
  - (3) It is important to keep in mind that NOK are likely to be extremely distressed, even overwhelmed with shock and grief. By showing compassion you will demonstrate to families that you are working on behalf of them and their loved ones.
  - (4) If the person to be notified answered the telephone directly, or it is not otherwise clear that another adult is with the NOK, as him/her if there is someone with him/her and offer to call back once the NOK has someone there. You may also offer to call for assistance for the next of kin. CA/OCS may be of assistance to you in contacting other family members, friends, clergy, or if necessary, local police or medical assistance.

<b>During this time it is best to:</b>	<b>Make sure not to:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convey sympathy;</li> <li>• Say “I understand how distressing this is for you.” And</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share personal experiences;</li> <li>• Say “I know how you feel.”</li> <li>• Be cold or distant;</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to the deceased by name or as your son/daughter.</li> <li>• Convey the idea of bringing him or her home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be too clinical; or</li> <li>• Use terms such as “deceased,” “your late ...”, “the remains”</li> </ul>
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(5) **Remain Composed:** As family members (“callers”) may be uncertain of their loved one’s condition or experience disbelief at what you are telling them, their frustration or anger may be directed towards you. They may also express personal beliefs that you may not necessarily agree with.

<b>During this time it is best to ...</b>	<b>Make sure not to ...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain composed;</li> <li>• Act professional; and</li> <li>• Respect religious or personal beliefs of the callers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Argue;</li> <li>• Be defensive;</li> <li>• Respond to personal attacks or the caller’s anger; or</li> <li>• Question the personal beliefs of callers.</li> </ul>

(6) **Take Your Time:** Always bear in mind the extreme pressure the NOK is under.

<b>During this time it is best to ...</b>	<b>Make sure not to ...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show your appreciation for the extreme pressure the caller is under; and</li> <li>• Assist the family to make necessary decisions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show impatience to move on to the next call; or</li> <li>• Expect immediate decisions from the family.</li> </ul>

(7) **Communicate clearly:** Callers may feel very confused and not quite understand the impact of the situation.

<b>During this time it is best to ...</b>	<b>Make sure not to ...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeat information;</li> <li>• Speak slowly;</li> <li>• Use short sentences;</li> <li>• Try to respond to specific questions;</li> <li>• Stress the positive actions you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use abbreviations or acronyms or;</li> <li>• Convey bureaucratic obstacles.</li> </ul>

<p>can take.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending upon the caller’s reaction, consider suggesting that the conversation continue after the caller has a family member or friend with them.</li> </ul>	
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(8) **Relaying Information:** Callers may question you on information they have heard through media reports.

<b>During this time it is best to ...</b>	<b>Make sure not to ...</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain that the media may speculate;</li> <li>• Explain the Department of State prefers to report only known facts;</li> <li>• Say only what the Department of State has authorized you to say;</li> <li>• Let the family know you (or your replacement) will be in touch with them as soon as information is confirmed; or</li> <li>• Set a time when you will call again and do it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give your opinions; or</li> <li>• Relay rumor or unsubstantiated information. Sometimes information is reported by a reliable source, such as police, but not confirmed as with a presumed death, or the details of an accident etc. (See 7 FAM 230 and 7 FAM 280).</li> </ul>

(9) **Additional Suggestions:**

- (a) **Take Your Cue From The NOK:** Let the NOK determine the course of the rest of the conversation. Sometimes the NOK will immediately want detailed information on what happened. At other times the NOK will be too upset to continue the conversation but may want another relative or friend to talk to the consular officer. The NOK will often be unable to think clearly upon receiving the news of the death, or will want to immediately call a friend or relative. Offer to call the NOK back within 15-30 minutes of the initial call to answer any additional questions he or she may have. In all cases, the officer should leave a name and phone number so the NOK can return the call later if they so wish.
- (b) Provide the NOK with as much information as is known, stressing when necessary that the information is preliminary and/or inconclusive. You should **never speculate or draw**

**personal conclusions about what happened**, such as saying, “I think your son died of a drug overdose.” It is appropriate to refer instead to the reports of competent local authorities: “The police have informed the Embassy that they suspect your son may have died of a drug overdose.”

- (c) **Cause of Death Unknown:** It is not sufficient to state that “the cause of death is unknown” or “the police are investigating.” The family has a need to know something about what happened, even if the information available to you is sketchy and incomplete. The information available should be provided with appropriate qualifications as to its accuracy. It will help the NOK in coming to terms with the death.
- (d) **Decisions:** In the majority of situations in which the NOK are notified by telephone, no decision on disposition of remains will have been made during that initial phone call. The NOK may want to discuss details about the disposition of remains during the initial telephone call. Usually it is best to encourage the NOK to wait for the follow up fax or email letter which will provide detailed information on decisions they will have to make. Family may provide instructions by phone, followed by a fax or e-mail confirmation.
- (e) **Tactfully Raise the Issue of Time Constraints and Costs:** Because consular officers are not authorized to assume any financial responsibility in connection with the disposition of remains, it is timely to mention this requirement to the NOK. This is usually done in the fax or email that follows the telephone death notification. After breaking the news of the death and responding to immediate questions regarding the cause of death and the location of the deceased, let the NOK mention any disposition request, if they know that during the first conversation, then say additional details will follow in writing by fax or email. Keep in mind that the NOK will be in shock so he or she may not really be hearing anything after you inform the NOK that the loved one is dead. If the NOK presses for additional information about costs during the death notification conversation, suggested language is:

**Sample Language:**

“While we sincerely regret the need to raise this issue at this time, “Costs for disposition of your loved one are the responsibility of the family. Information will be provided in a letter we will email or fax to you.

**If ASKED:** “To the best of my knowledge in (name of city and country where post is located), such expenses will be approximately (amount of

money, if known, or estimate of anticipated expenses, if not known).

- (f) **Deaths of Young People:** The Department's experience indicates the cases in which a young person dies completely unexpectedly tend to be especially traumatic for the close relatives and require the utmost consular tact and sympathy. See 7 FAM 230 for guidance regarding homicides, suicides and deaths under non-natural, unusual circumstances. See 7 FAM 200 Appendix C (under development) for guidance on handling deaths of children, stillbirths and late-term miscarriages.
- (g) **Medical Emergency Assistance for Next of Kin:** In unusual circumstances where it appears that telephonic notification of death destabilized the NOK, and might result in a heart attack or other serious medical condition, the consular officer should immediately notify CA/OCS and seek guidance to obtain help from 911.

## 7 FAM 222.3 Written Notification - Fax or E-Mail or Express Mail Confirmation Letters

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a. When the NOK in the United States has been initially notified by telephone, the post must follow up immediately **IN NEARLY ALL CASES** with a written notification confirming the circumstances of the death and providing the family with such essential information as options about disposition of remains, personal effects, and issuance of the report of the death. This written communication is usually sent by fax, email or express mail according to the NOK instructions to the consular officer after notification of death is made by phone. **You should not send the written notification until notification is made by phone.** In unusual circumstances where it is not clear to whom written notification should be sent, for example when the surviving NOK is a minor, consult CA/OCS/ACS for guidance.
- b. 7 FAM Exhibit 222.3 provides sample language to be used in written casualty messages to families confirming the death of a loved one. The model casualty message consists of three separate documents.
  - (1) The condolence letter which notifies the family in writing of the death of the U.S. citizen abroad;
  - (2) Information regarding disposition of remains;
  - (3) Information regarding consular report of death.
- c. Posts are urged to use judgment in tailoring casualty messages to the



specific case at hand, adding or subtracting language as necessary. CA recognizes that the laws concerning disposition of remains and the facilities available vary from country to country and that this may require modifications of the formats where options for disposition are discussed. All casualty message letters calling for an officer's signature should in fact be signed before being transmitted to the next-of-kin by fax. Emailed letters may be signed and saved in pdf form and attached to an email or the email letter may simply include the signature block. Posts should be able to provide the emailed letter on electronic letterhead.

- d. The death notification message is also important because sometimes families use it as evidence of death to assist in settling certain urgent financial matters, such as obtaining bank loans to pay for funeral expenses. The casualty message does not take the place of the report of the death, but it may alleviate the urgency with which the family awaits receipt of the report of death.

## **7 FAM 222.4 When Telephone Notification Has Not Been Made**

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a. The post may be unable to reach the NOK by telephone for a variety of reasons:
  - (1) Telephone connections to the United States may be difficult;
  - (2) The NOK may have an unlisted number;
  - (3) The NOK may not be at home; or
  - (4) The NOK may not be known or clearly identified.
- b. If, for any reason, the post is unable to telephonically reach the NOK, the post should take the following steps:
  - (1) Notify CA/OCS by phone, email or fax. You can reach the CA/OCS weekly duty officer through the Operations Center at (202) 647-1512.
  - (2) Enter the case data in the ACS Plus system
  - (3) The Department (CA/OCS/ACS) will undertake to telephone the NOK. The possibility always exists that the NOK are away from the home or have changed their address(es). CA/OCS/ACS will make every effort (through the assistance of on line research tools, local police, the telephone company, the Red Cross, churches, business firms, or schools) to contact the NOK to ensure that they receive the telephonic notification of death.



## **7 FAM 223 WHEN NEXT OF KIN IS UNKNOWN**

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a. When the post is unable readily to determine the name and address of the closest relative or other person who should be informed, the consular officer should alert CA/OCS/ACS by phone or email and enter the case data in the ACS Plus (American Citizens Services) system. Notification of the Department by telegram is no longer required, except for mass casualty or unusual deaths in which other persons in the Department will need access to the information or other types of death case that are likely to lead to inquiries.
- b. The Department (CA/OCS/ACS) then:
  - (1) Attempts to identify and locate the proper person for notification;
  - (2) Attempts to notify that person by telephone;
  - (3) Requests post send email or fax casualty message to the family.

## **7 FAM 224 EXCEPTIONS TO CONSULAR REPORTING**

### **7 FAM 224.1 Department of Defense Personnel**

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a. The Department of Defense (DOD) is responsible for officially reporting the death abroad of its military and civilian personnel. If no representative of DOD is present in the consular district or the host country in which the death occurred the consular officer reports the particulars of the death to the Department of State for action by the Defense Department. (See 22 CFR 72.2(a)). The DOD will provide instructions to the consular officer for the disposition and transport of remains, and for the safeguarding and disposition of the personal estate of the decedent.
- b. DOD responsibility does not extend to dependents of DOD military or civilian personnel or civilian contractors of the DOD and their dependents. Consular officers report the death of these persons as set forth in subchapter 7 FAM 220.

### **7 FAM 224.2 U.S. Coast Guard Personnel**

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a. The United States Coast Guard is responsible for reporting the death of its

military and civilian personnel. If a person dies in a European country where no Coast Guard detail is assigned, the consular officer notifies the Senior Coast Guard Merchant Marine Detail Officer (Europe), London. If the death occurs outside Europe, the consular officer should send the details of the death to the Department for action by the Coast Guard. The U.S. Coast Guard will provide instructions to the consular officer for the disposition and transport of remains, and for the safeguarding and disposition of the personal estate of the decedent.

- b. The responsibility of the Coast Guard does not extend to reporting the deaths of dependents of Coast Guard personnel. Consular officers report these deaths as set forth in subchapter 7 FAM 220.

## **7 FAM 224.3 Death of Peace Corps Personnel**

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a. In **no case** should a consular officer report the death of Peace Corps (PC) personnel (including Peace Corps employees, volunteers and trainees) to the NOK. The consular officer should report the matter to the CA/OCS duty officer through the Operations Center at (202) 647-1512. CA/OCS/ACS will relay the information to the Peace Corps Office of Special Services (M/SS). The consular officer should coordinate action with the Peace Corps Country Director.
- b. The Peace Corps Country Director is responsible for immediately reporting the details about the death to the Director of the Peace Corps, through the Peace Corps Office of Special Services (M/SS). The Peace Corps country director also is responsible for the disposition and shipment of the remains, and for the safeguarding and disposition of the personal estate of the decedent (as stated in the Peace Corps Manual Section (PCMS or MS) 265, Overseas Disappearances and Deaths). The death should also be reported by the Regional Security Officer (RSO) to DS/CIL. DS/CIL is responsible for expeditiously notifying the Peace Corps Office of the Inspector General.
- c. The Peace Corps country director generally will seek the advice and guidance of the consular officer, particularly on issues not specifically addressed in PCMS 265 (Peace Corps Manual Section), including the proper manner for preparing the inventories and appraisals of personal possessions, consular mortuary certificate and other documentation.
- d. The Peace Corps country director, coordinating with the consular officer, also assists dependents who are not Peace Corps Volunteers (PCV), trainees (PCT), or employees: a spouse (most spouses are also PCT's or PCV's), or a dependent child (in the death of PCT, PCV, or employee parents), or parents (in the death of the PCTs, PCVs, or child).

- e. In addition to notifications sent by Peace Corps personnel, the consular officer promptly reports the death of Peace Corps personnel to CA/OCS by telegram, with an information copy to the Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, DC. The consular officer also completes the consular mortuary certificate to facilitate disposition of remains, prepares the consular Form DS-2060, Report of Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad (See 7 FAM 270), as soon as all pertinent information is available, and provides guidance to the Peace Corps Country Director, as necessary.

## **7 FAM 225 DEATH OF DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES AND THEIR DEPENDENTS**

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

- a. Telegraphic notification of the death abroad of a Department employee or the dependent of a State Department employee is a management, not consular, action. (See 3 FAM 2550 and 3 FAH-1 H-3660).
- b. The Office of Casualty Assistance Intranet page includes extensive guidance about responding to grieving families in the aftermath of a critical incident. Consular officers should provide consular assistance in the issuance of the consular mortuary certificate and the consular Form DS-2060, Report of the Death of an American Citizen Abroad in the event of the death of Department employees and their dependents. The Office of Medical Services' (M/MED) Intranet Page includes a section on Stress and Disaster Response.

### **Office of Casualty Assistance:**

Supporting Those Who Are Grieving

### **The Stages of the Grieving Process**

Responding to Grieving Families in the Immediate Aftermath of a Critical Incident

### **Task Force Conversations With Families**

Responding to Grieving Families in the Weeks and Months Ahead

### **Communications Skills**

Listening Skills

### **When a Co-worker Suffers a Loss**

### **c. Death of Contract Employees:**

- (1) In the event of the death of a Department of State contract employee while abroad, responsibility for notifying the contracting firm (when the contract is with a company) or NOK (if a personal

services contract) lies with the post's management section.

- (2) The management officer may wish to seek the advice and guidance of the consular officer regarding local requirements concerning disposition of remains, consular mortuary certificates, Foreign Service Reports of Death, etc.
- (3) If the post cannot reach the contracting firm/NOK, post should contact the office in the Department responsible for the contract or, if after normal work hours, the appropriate duty officer for that contracting office.
- (4) In case of death of a U.S. citizen contract employee who was hired at post, section 3 FAH-1 H-3661 applies.

## **7 FAM 226 NOTIFICATION TO STATE VITAL RECORDS OFFICIALS WITHIN 5 DAYS OF THE DEATH**

*(CT:CON-158; 02-13-2007)*

- a. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institute of Health Statistics has advised the Department of State (DOS) that its proposed implementing regulations for Section 7211 of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, Public Law 108-458 will include a mandatory reporting requirement from the Department of State to U.S. state Vital Records offices of the death abroad of a person born in a U.S. state or other U.S. jurisdiction within five days learning of the date of death.
- b. Posts should notify the vital records office in the U.S. state or other U.S. jurisdiction where the deceased U.S. citizen was born via email within five days of post's notification of the death.*

**See CA/OCS Intranet ...**

*Email Contacts for State Vital Records Offices*

- c. Posts will be advised when the final arrangements are concluded. At present it appears that the death information fields to be included in email notification to the vital records office are:

### **Information to be Emailed to State Vital Records Office in U.S. State or Other U.S. Jurisdiction Where Decedent Was Born:**

- Name of Deceased (If known, also include name changes from the birth name, e.g., if married, use maiden name; if name changed by

courts, use name at birth)

- Date of Birth
- Place of Birth
- Date of Death
- Place of Death (city, country)
- Reporting Office: Name of Consular Officer, Title of Consular Officer, U.S. Embassy/Consulate (city, country); email address

d. Posts should also continue to provide state vital records offices with a copy of the Foreign Service Report of Death when that document becomes available. Addresses of the various state offices concerned are found in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on line publication, Where to Write for Vital Records, which is revised periodically. (See 7 FAM 276.3).

## **7 FAM 227 REFERENCE AND RESOURCES ON DEATH NOTIFICATION**

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

See ...

### **U.S. Department of Justice**

U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime – Death Notification

### **Department of Defense**

Casualty and Memorial Affairs Operations Center – Casualty Notification Officer Training

Casualty Notification Guide

Casualty Assistance Calls Officer Handbook

DOD Instruction 1300.18

### **NGOs**

National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – Casualty and Death Notification

The Althea Foundation – Casualty Notification On Line Training

National Funeral Directors Association – Death of U.S. Citizens Abroad

### **End of Life Palliative Education Resource Center**

Informing Significant Others of a Patient’s Death

**Western Journal of Medicine**

Notifying Survivors About Sudden Deaths

**Police**

Royal Canadian Mounted Police – Death Notification

Police Stress – Death Messenger

Police Life Chaplain’s Column Death Notification

**Compassionate Friends**

When a Law Officer Responds to the Death of a Child

**U.S. Department of State**

Suggested Fax Sheet for U.S. Law Enforcement for Notifying Foreign Consular Officers in the United States of the Death of a National

**7 FAM 228 THROUGH 229 UNASSIGNED**

## **7 FAM EXHIBIT 222.3**

### **DEATH NOTIFICATION CASUALTY MESSAGE**

*(CT:CON-153; 01-11-2007)*

<p><b>NOTE:</b> The following suggested texts should be adjusted as appropriate.</p>
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#### **Part One Letter of Condolence**

Dear (Name of Next of Kin),

It is with profound regret that I must confirm the death of your (relationship), (Name of deceased) on (date of death) in (place of death). On behalf of the United States Government, please allow me to extend my condolences to you and your family in your bereavement.

As I explained in my telephone call to you today, I am (emailing, faxing, express mailing) you this letter to provide you with information the U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) has received regarding the death of your (relationship).

The U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) in (city, country) learned of your (relationship's) death on (Date) through (name of informant). According to (the police, attending physician, etc.), (provide brief explanation of the circumstances of the death. If the cause of death is not yet determined, provide explanatory paragraph: Medical authorities have not yet determined the cause of your (relationship's) death.) (If applicable) In accordance with (country) law, an autopsy will be performed as soon as possible. The U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) will update you on the circumstances of your (relationship's) death as soon as we receive more information from local authorities.

The U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) is prepared to help you in any way we can. We stand ready to carry out your instructions regarding the disposition of your (relationship's) remains, and are sending you, via a separate message, information which we believe will help you to make necessary decisions. The consular section of the (Embassy/Consulate) will also take charge of your (relationship's) personal effects and compile an inventory. As soon as possible, we will send you a copy of the inventory along with information explaining what will be required for disposition of



your (relationship's) belongings.

Please do not hesitate to contact (name of consular officer) at the U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) in (City, Country) at (011) (consular section phone number including country code and city code) should you have any further questions. The Embassy's emergency duty officer can be reached after working hours and on weekends by telephoning (011) (Embassy/Consulate after-hours phone number including country code and city code).

Again, please accept my sincere condolences to you and your family.

Sincerely,

(Name of Consular Officer)

(Title of Consular Officer)

U.S. (Embassy/Consulate)

(City, Country)

## **Part Two - Information Regarding Disposition of Remains**

Dear (Next of Kin),

It is unfortunate at this sad time that we must immediately call your attention to the urgent need for making necessary arrangements relation to the disposition of your (relationship's) remains. (Country) law requires disposition of remains (either cremation or burial) within (time) hours unless the remains are to be shipped outside the country. The following paragraphs explain the options you have for making your decisions.

Should you decide to have burial take place in (country), the consular officer and local officials will take every possible care to follow your wishes as to ceremony and site of burial. The cost for preparation and burial in (city, country) is approximately (amount) dollars. The cost for cremation and disposition of ashes in (city, country) is approximately (amount) dollars.

Should you decide to have the remains returned to the United States for burial, the costs would be substantially greater due to the high cost of air freight and embalming.

The total cost for preparation and air shipment of remains to the United States is approximately (amount) dollars.

The total cost for preparation, cremation and air shipment of ashes to the United States is approximately (amount) dollars.

We should point out that preparation and air shipment are carried out in accordance with the laws of and facilities available in (country). In some cases, the services fall short of those expected in the United States. We recommend that you ask your hometown funeral director to determine the advisability of viewing the remains.

To facilitate the transfer of funds to the U.S. (Embassy/Consulate), the Department of State provides a means whereby you may wire money to the Department in Washington, DC. Upon receipt of the funds, the State Department will authorize the U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) to use the money for the preparation and disposition of your (relationship's) remains according to your instructions. Please note that the Department charges a (amount) processing fee for the transfer of funds. You may forward the funds by Western Union telegraphic money order to the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520. Please include in the money order the full name of the deceased, your instructions as to the disposition of the remains, and instructions that the funds should be transmitted to the U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) in (city, country). Alternatively, you may request your bank to wire the funds to the U.S. Department of State care of Bank of America, Department of State Branch, 2201 C St. NW, Washington, DC 20520 at 202-624-4750, ABA Number: 114000653, Account Number: 7476363838. See Sending Money To U.S. Citizens Overseas flyer on the Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet page. Please include Special Instructions: "Department of State, OCS for Benefit of Disposition of Remains of (Name of deceased), U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) (city, country)" and include your name, address and telephone number. Please note that the transfer of bank wires through Bank of America may take several days (as opposed to several hours through Western Union). Bank of America charges a fee for processing the bank wire.

After all bills for costs incurred in the preparation and shipment of the remains have been received and paid, you will be sent an itemized accounting of final costs. Any balance left will be refunded to you by the Department of State.

Should you have further questions, please contact the Office of Overseas Citizen Services at the Department of State at 202-647-5226 between 8:15 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time Monday through Friday. At other times, the Overseas Citizens Services duty officer may be contacted at (202) 647-1512.

Please accept my condolences at this very difficult time.

Sincerely,

(Name of Consular Officer)

(Title of Consular Officer)

(U.S. Embassy/Consulate)

(City, Country)

## **Part Two Supplementary Language – Funds Provided For Disposition of Remains**

In cases where the deceased was carrying sufficient cash to pay for the arrangements or when a relative, companion, employer, insurance company, credit card company or other party will pay all necessary expenses, post may incorporate the following language into the letter, omitting language on transfer of funds.

We have been informed that (name, address, telephone number of person or organization paying expenses) will assume responsibility for all expenses incurred in the burial or preparation and shipment of remains of (name of deceased) to the United States. However, to insure that your wishes are carried out, your written instructions are required as soon as possible. We ask that you both fax your instructions to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate at 011 (Consular Section Fax number, including country code and city code) and email them to the Embassy/Consulate at (email address). Your instructions should give the full name of the deceased, your name and address and phone numbers and email address where you can be

reached. If shipment of remains to the United States is desired, please include the name, address and full telephone number of the U.S. Funeral Home you have selected to handle the arrangements.

### **Part Two Supplementary Language – Next of Kin Has Decided on a Method of Disposition of Remains Prior to Receiving U.S. Embassy/Consulate Casualty Message**

In Cases where the NOK has decided on the method of disposition of remains prior to receipt of the casualty message, post may omit information regarding other forms of remains disposition. In such cases, posts should begin the "Information on Disposition of Remains" letter with the following language:

Dear (Name of Next of Kin),

It is unfortunate at this sad time that we must immediately call your attention to the urgent need for making necessary arrangements. (Country) law requires disposition of remains (either cremation or burial) within (time) hours unless the remains are to be shipped outside the country. During our telephone conversation, you expressed your desire to have your (relationship's) remains (embalmed/cremated/prepared/shipped) to the United States. The total cost for preparation and air shipment to the United States is approximately (amount) dollars. We will carry out your instructions as soon as funds are received.

Post should finish the letter using the sample text provided in Part Two above, beginning "To facilitate the transfer of funds to the U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) in (Country).

### **Part Three – Information Regarding Consular Report of Death**

Dear (Name of NOK),

In order to assist you with legal matters that may occur as a result of the unfortunate death of your (relationship) in (city, country), a Form DS-2060, Report of the Death of an American Citizen Abroad prepared by the U.S. (Embassy/Consulate) will be forwarded to you as soon as possible. This

document is in English and is normally based upon the (country) death certificate. It can generally be used in U.S. courts to help settle estate matters. As the report of death can only be issued after (country) authorities complete their documentation of the death, we anticipate an interval of (time) weeks before the report of death can be issued. Certified copies will be sent to you and the original will be sent to the Department of State for permanent filing. Up to ten copies of the Form DS-2060, Report of the Death of an American Abroad, issued at the time of death, will be provided to you free of charge. If in the future you find you need additional copies, they can be obtained from the Department of State, Passport Services, Vital Records Office. Information about fees for addition copies and how to make a request is available from the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs webpage.

I hope this information will be helpful to you. Again, you and your family have my condolences.

Sincerely,

(Name of Consular Officer)

(Title of Consular Officer)

(U.S. Embassy/Consulate)

(City, Country)