



National Funeral Directors Association
*Informs *Educates *Advocates

2011 POLICY

UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING STANDARDS FOR HUMAN REMAINS

NFDA Position

Establish or Support Uniform International Shipping Standards for Human Remains

Background

With the increasing number of deaths of those whose country of origin is other than the United States, American funeral directors are confronted with a myriad of different and complex shipping requirements for each country. A uniform standard for the shipment of human remains outside the continental United States would facilitate the shipment process and provide the families involved with greater certainty that their loved ones would reach their country of origin in tact and in a timely manner.

Discussion

NFDA is a long-standing member of the Federation Internationale des Associations de Thanatologues-International Federation of Thanatologists Associations (FIAT/IFTA). FIAT/IFTA is proposing and promoting an “International Passport for the Dead” and asking all its member countries, some 70 of them, to promote it. [**Note:** Thanatology is the study of death, dying and grief]. This Passport or travel pass for the dead would include all relevant information by numbered questions which would enable a body to travel from one country to another easily. This document would be available in over 25 languages. A translated version of the English one would be attached based on the country where the body was being shipped....more if it was to pass through multiple countries. The standard death certificate, embalming certificate, out of country police document, funeral directors declaration and free from infectious document would all be attached to this Travel Pass.

The original idea and draft document was launched in Kyoto, Japan in 2002. While this document has NO legal standing, funeral directors in at least 10 countries have bought it. They are Canada, Belgium, France, Spain, Finland, The Netherlands, Japan, Ireland, the United Kingdom and Turkey. The forms are available from FIAT/IFTA for one dollar (\$1.00 each).

In discussing this issue with the NFDA representative, he indicated that FIAT/IFTA has no plans to secure legal status of this form with any of its member countries. Previous efforts to do this by securing approval from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Air Transport Association have failed. Without legal status, this form is only as good as those Customs agents in each country are willing to accept it. Generally speaking, if the document is

complete and all the relevant information and back-up documents are in order, it has been accepted.

If NFDA is to take any role in this, it should be to obtain legal status of the form with the countries that belong to FIAT/IFTA. It is recommended that the NFDA Representative should approach the International Council for Direction (ICD), the Executive Council of FIAT/IFTA for that purpose. In addition, NFDA will re-approach the International Air Transport Association and ask their members to officially recognize this form and use its international members to work it through their governments.

NFDA Governance History:

2005: Committee Action 2/3/05; Policy Board Action 3/7/05

2006: Committee Action 1/17/06; Policy Board Action 3/8/06

2007: Committee Action 1/16/07; Policy Board Action 3/26/07

2008: Committee Action 1/14/08; Policy Board Action 3/10/08

2009: Committee Action 1/29/09; Policy Board Action 3/30/09

2010: Committee Action 1/20/10; Policy Board Action 3/08/10

2011: Committee Action 1/27/11; Policy Board Action 3/09/11

Attest: NFDA Policy Board (original resolution) Date: March 7, 2005 File Code: RES080.Policybd