



health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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# Requirements and Process for the Issuance of Permits to Import and Export Human Remains

## PREFACE

The transportation of human remains across international borders poses unique health risks, which include the potential of spreading infectious diseases during the handling and transportation of the remains. It is therefore important for health risks associated with the importation and exportation of human remains to be mitigated through the implementation of certain health measures. As part of reducing the health risks associated with importing and exporting human remains, the Department has introduced health measures for the transportation of human remains across the borders of the Republic.

The Regulations Relating to the Management of Human Remains, R. No. 363 of 22 May 2013, provide for matters related to the management of human remains. Chapter 4 of these Regulations makes provision for the importation, exportation and conveyance of human remains and requires persons to obtain a permit issued by the Director-General of Health before importing or exporting human remains. This guide therefore outlines requirements for the issuance of an import and export permit and is intended to assist funeral undertakers, relevant authorities and other stakeholders involved in the transportation of human remains across the borders of the Republic.

The delicate nature of arranging for the transportation of the deceased is recognized and through the development of this document, the Department further intends to promote efficient and timely processes related to the issuance of import and export permits for the transportation of human remains while striving to protect public health from associated health risks.



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**DIRECTOR-GENERAL HEALTH**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The repatriation of human remains from one country to the other brings with it various public health risks that may have negative impacts on health if not managed and monitored appropriately. A need therefore exists to ensure measures are put in place to prevent and control potential public health risks associated with the transportation of human remains. Chapter 4 of the Regulations Relating to the Management of Human Remains, R No.363 of 22 May 2013 (herein referred to as 'the Regulations') outline requirements for importation, exportation and conveyance of human remains.

Section 14(1) of the Regulations prescribes that no person may import, or export human remains unless he or she is issued with an import or export permit by the Director-General of Health. This document therefore seeks to outline the requirements and processes that should be followed by persons requiring an import or export permit.

## 2. PROCESS OF REQUESTING IMPORT AND EXPORT PERMITS

All requests for an import or export permit must be submitted to the National Department of Health to the email address [humanremainspermits@health.gov.za](mailto:humanremainspermits@health.gov.za). No walk-in submissions are permitted. Only under exceptional circumstances will a walk-in submission be accepted and an appointment must be made beforehand for such. No permits will be issued at the point of entry and therefore persons transporting human remains must have a permit issued by the National Department of Health before arriving at the point of entry.

## 3. REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

The below mentioned documents must be attached on the email when a request for a permit is submitted to the National Department of Health. If the documents are not in English, a certified translation must be attached.

### 3.1 Import Permit

- a) Cover letter from either the Embassy or funeral undertaker with full contact details. The cover letter should include:
  - i. Name of the deceased, place of burial, date of death, place of death and the cause of death.
  - ii. The name of the South African Point of Entry through which the remains will be imported.
  - iii. The type of transport to be used to import human remains.
- b) Death certificate, clearly stating the cause of death.
- c) Identity document or passport of the deceased.
- d) Embalming certificate stating the remains have been embalmed.
- e) Letter from the family member requesting importation, their contact details and his/her identity document or passport.
- f) A non-infectious or infectious disease certificate signed by a registered medical personnel or forensic pathologist.
- g) Certificate of Competence of the funeral undertaker who will be handling and processing the remains once the remains enter South Africa.

### **3.2 Export Permit**

- a) Cover letter from either the Embassy or funeral undertaker with full contact details. The cover letter should include:
  - i. Name of the deceased, place of burial, date of death, place of death and the cause of death.
  - ii. The name of the South African Point of Entry through which the remains will be exported.
  - iii. The type of transport to be used to export human remains.
- b) Death certificate, clearly stating the cause of death.
- c) Identity document or passport of the deceased or an affidavit from the South African Police Service (SAPS) if the deceased does not have any means of identification.
- d) Embalming certificate which is stamped with the details of both the funeral undertaker and the embalmer, stating the remains have been embalmed and reflecting the physical address of the premises where embalming was conducted.
- e) Letter from the family member requesting exportation and granting the Embassy or funeral undertaker approval to process transportation of the remains, their contact details and his/her identity document or passport.
- f) A non-infectious or infectious disease certificate signed by a registered medical personnel or forensic pathologist.
- g) Notice of Death form (BI 1663).
- h) Burial Order issued by the Department of Home Affairs.
- i) A Certificate of Competence of the funeral undertaker or mortuary handling and processing the human remains in South Africa.

### **3.3. Exhumation and Importation**

- a) Cover letter from either the Embassy or funeral undertaker with full contact details. The cover letter should include:
  - i. Name of deceased, country of death, place of reburial, date of death, cause of death and contact numbers.
  - ii. The name of the South African Point of Entry through which the remains will be imported.
- b) Death certificate (Not required if body has been buried more than 20 years)
- c) ID or passport of deceased or an affidavit if the deceased does not have any means of identification.
- d) Letter from family member requesting importation of the exhumed remains.
- e) ID or passport of family member requesting importation.
- f) Valid Certificate of Competence of the funeral undertaker handling the human remains upon entry into South Africa.

### **3.4 Exhumation and Exportation**

- a) Cover letter from either the Embassy or funeral undertaker with full contact details. The cover letter should include:
  - iii. Name of deceased, country of reburial, date of death, cause of death and contact numbers.

- iv. The name of the South African Point of Entry through which the remains will be exported.
- b) Death certificate (Not required if body has been buried more than 20 years)
- c) ID or passport of deceased or an affidavit if the deceased does not have any means of identification.
- d) Letter from family member requesting exportation of the exhumed remains.
- e) ID or passport of family member requesting exportation.
- f) Valid Certificate of Competence of the funeral undertaker handling the human remains in South Africa.

### **3.5 Additional Information**

#### **a) Embalming Certificate**

- In the case of non-infectious remains – the certificate should indicate that the remains were embalmed, sealed in an airtight container and placed in a sturdy-nontransparent coffin.
- In the case of infectious human remains – the certificate should indicate that the remains were embalmed, placed in a polythene bag, sealed in an airtight container and placed in a sturdy, non-transparent container.
- If for religious reasons embalming cannot be done, a statement from the relevant authority of the alternative method that will be used to ensure the preservation and safe transportation of the remains must be included. This must be done immediately for infection control purposes.

#### **b) Letter from a family member or employer requesting importation/exportation:**

- A copy of the Identity Document or Passport and contact details of the family member of the deceased.
- An affidavit in cases where the deceased and family member requesting exportation do not share the same surname.
- If the deceased died while on business for their employer and the employer will be handling the transportation of the remains, a letter from the employer explaining the situation must be attached, including a copy of the identity document or passport of the employer.

#### **c) Non-infectious or infectious certificate**

- The certificate must be completed by the medical personnel who managed the deceased or the forensic pathologist who handled the remains clearly stipulating whether the body is infectious or not infectious.

## **4. PROCESSING TIME**

If all requirements are met, a permit will be issued at least within 2 working days after receipt of the application. Applicants are however, encouraged to apply well in advance and ensure that all required documentation is made available on application in order for the National Department of Health to meet the target timelines. Applications must only be sent if all required documents are available.

Applicants are requested to not send applications in duplicate as this may delay the issuance of permit.

## 5. CONDITIONS THAT MAY WARRANT NON-ISSUE OF A PERMIT

If any of the above-mentioned requirements in the guideline are not met, a permit may not be issued.

If false or misleading information is submitted, a permit will not be issued.

## 6. CREMATED HUMAN REMAINS

No import or export permit is required should cremated remains be imported or exported. In such cases, the death certificate, cremation certificate and copy of the deceased identification must accompany the ashes at all times during the transportation. Ashes should be contained in a sealed airtight container and placed in an urn.

## 7. IMPORT AND EXPORT OF CADAVERS FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL TRAINING PURPOSES

An application for the import and export of cadavers used for training purposes at medical schools must include the following:

- Approved letter signed by the Inspector of Anatomy
- Death certificate, ID or passport of each cadaver
- Letter from the Dean or delegated official from the Medical School who confirms a request either to export or import the cadaver/s with full details of the cadaver/s
- The letter from the Medical School clearly stating the preservation method used on the cadaver/s.
- Letter from the undertaker requesting the import or export and indicating the PoE through which the cadaver/s will be transported.

## 8. CONTACT DETAILS

All queries related to the issuance of human remains permit applications must be directed to the below-mentioned officials during office hours;

<b>Ms Maria Mabaso</b>	<b>Ms Tumisho Maleka</b>
Tel: 012 395 9677	Tel: 012 395 8802

Should any additional information be required or you experience challenges with the issuance of a permit, the below-mentioned officials may be contacted;

<b>Ms Mashudu Mainganye</b>	<b>Ms Pam Masilela</b>
Tel: 012 395 9103	Tel: 012 395 8520
<b>Mr Siyabonga Mdlalose</b>	<b>Ms Albertina Menyatso</b>
Tel: 012 395 9730	Tel: 012 395 9162