

Disposition of Remains Report: Sapporo
September 15, 2015

Part I. Name of Country: Japan

Part II. U.S. Embassy or Consulate Information

U.S. Consulate General

Address: 3-1, Kita 1-jo Nishi 28-chome, Chuo-ku, Sapporo 064-0821, Japan
Phone: Within Japan 011-641-1115; from outside Japan 81-11-641-1115
Fax: Within Japan 011-643-1283; from outside Japan 81-11-643-1283
After Hours Phone: Within Japan 03-3224-5000; from outside Japan 81-3-3224-5000

State Department Country Specific Information

<<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/japan.html>>

State Department Travel Information

<<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>>

Smart Travel Enrollment Program (STEP) <<https://step.state.gov/step/>>

Part III. Profile of Religions of the Host Country

Country Profile: Visit the State Department's website "Background Note: Japan"

<<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4142.htm>>

Country Profile: Japan

Religions: Shintoism and Buddhism are Japan's two principal religions. Christianity has an estimated 3 million adherents throughout Japan.

PART IV. Funeral Directors, Mortician and Related Services Available in Sapporo and its vicinity:

DISCLAIMER: The U.S. Consulate General, Sapporo, Japan assumes no responsibility or liability for the professional ability or reputation of, or the quality of services provided by, the following firm. Professional credentials and areas of expertise are provided directly by the funeral directors, morticians and other service providers.

-- NK Hokkaido (Hokkaido Embalming Center)

Phone (Japanese only): Within Japan 011-879-5000; from outside Japan 81-11-879-5000
8-31, Kitago 3-jo 11-chome, Shiroishi-ku, Sapporo 003-0833

For other service providers in Tohoku Region (Aomori, Akita, Iwate and Miyagi prefectures), also refer to Tokyo's report.

PART V. Profile of services available in Japan regarding preparation and shipment of remains.

The Consulate General Sapporo has modified the Embassy Tokyo's report (Revised June 13, 2014), for use in Sapporo. All dollar costs have been converted from the cost in local currency at the exchange rate of Yen 115 to the U.S. dollar. (Note: Changes in exchange rates may mean higher dollar costs than those calculated in this document). As the laws and regulations are national in Japan, most part of the U.S. Embassy Tokyo's report is repeated. Sapporo's region-specific information is added where needed.

Cremation is the norm in Japan. Due to limited refrigerated storage facilities available at police stations and hospitals, prompt arrangements for transfer of the body to a funeral home are required soon after a death. Police stations and hospitals usually have local funeral home contacts available for the family.

1. Maximum Period Before Burial

There is no Japanese law limiting the time in which a body must be interred, but the scarcity and expense of refrigerated storage facilities dictate that the disposition of remains be completed as quickly as possible, particularly in the summer months. Lack of immediate access to funds to pay for transportation and cold storage could lead to the unilateral disposition of the decomposing remains as a public health hazard by the local authorities. The only Japanese law governing the disposition of remains is Law No. 48 of 1948 ("Law Regarding Graveyards, Burials and Others"). This law states that "a corpse or stillborn fetus shall not be buried or cremated earlier than 24 hours after its death or birth, except as otherwise provided by ordinance". When death results from an infectious or epidemic disease, however, interment within 24 hours is permitted under Law No. 36 of April 1, 1897, entitled "Infectious Disease Prevention Law" which requires that (1) an immediate report be made to the Public Health Center so that areas of possible contamination may be promptly disinfected; and (2) a post-mortem examination be conducted by a physician, after which the body may be cremated or buried within 24 hours after death.

2. Embalming

Cremation is the norm in Japan and embalming is uncommon. The practice is so rare that it has never been subjected to government regulation. There are therefore no standards or licensing procedures.

A U.S.-standard commercial embalming facility was established in Sapporo in November 2000. If death occurs outside of Sapporo, the remains may be transferred to Sapporo or its branch facility in Tokyo for professional embalming.

3. Cremation

There are crematoria in most localities in Japan, and arrangements for cremation are handled by local undertakers. The only legal requirement is to obtain Permission for Cremation which is issued by the Village, Town, Ward, or City Office upon presentation of the Report of Death. Japanese cremation procedures do not result in the same sized fine ash as it does in the United States, but in somewhat larger-sized pieces of bone. For an additional charge, bone can be processed into fine bone.

4. Caskets and Containers

There are no Japanese laws, national or local, governing the exportation of human remains. A casket containing a body or human ashes is treated as ordinary freight. Shipping companies, however, require that the body be placed in a metal lined casket. Suitable caskets or transfer cases are readily available and meet the requirements of the U.S. Public Health Service and U.S. port authorities. Containers for human ashes are also available.

5. Exportation of Remains

and

6. Costs

Cost varies depending on the location where death occurs and different funeral directors. The following are approximate cost estimates made by a funeral director/embalmer in Sapporo.

ESTIMATED COST BREAKDOWN

1) Shipment of Ashes by Air Freight

	YEN	DOLLARS (¥115/\$)
Casket for Cremation	¥75,600	\$657
Cremation	¥43,200	\$376
Bone processing Fee (to make fine bones)	¥43,200	\$376

Urn	¥28,080	\$244
Urn Packing for Air Freight	¥27,000	\$235
Dry Ice (7 days) (¥5,250/day)	¥37,800	\$329
Mortuary (Funeral Hall for 7 days) (¥10,800/day)	¥75,600	\$657
Land Transportation (within Sapporo)	¥30,240	\$263
Land Transportation (from Sapporo to Sapporo/Chitose Airport)	¥43,200	\$376
Undertaker's Fees	¥54,000	\$470
White Clothing	¥6,480	\$56
Local Death Certificate (for unnatural death including postmortem)	¥70,000	\$609
Land Transportation (when death occurs outside Sapporo)	up to ¥400,000	up to \$3,478
Miscellaneous (incidental) expenses	¥108,000	\$939
Air Freight to U.S.		
Honolulu (20 kg)	¥90,411	\$786
Los Angeles (20 kg)	¥100,800	\$877
Chicago & Dallas (20 kg)	¥105,943	\$921
New York (20 kg)	¥10,800	\$877
Total:		
Honolulu	¥1,132,811	\$9,851
Los Angeles	¥1,143,200	\$9,941
Chicago & Dallas	¥1,148,343	\$9,986
New York	¥1,143,200	\$9,941

Required Documents (Shipment of Ashes by Air Freight):

1. Consular Mortuary Certificate
2. Report of Death (DS-2060)
3. Copy of Local Japanese Death Certificate (required by Japanese Customs)
4. Cremation Permit/Certificate (for cremation in Japan)
5. Affidavit by Local Funeral Director (Certificate of Contents)
or Certificate of Contents of Urn
6. Copy of the Deceased's U.S. Passport

2) Shipment of Embalmed Remains to U.S.
(Cost from Hokkaido and Tohoku to U.S.):

	YEN	DOLLARS (¥115/\$)
Casket for Air Freight	¥324,000	\$2,817
Embalming	¥259,200	\$2,254
Preparation for International Air Freight	¥27,000	\$235
Dry Ice (7 days) (¥5,250/day)	¥37,800	\$329
Mortuary (Funeral Hall for 7 days) (¥10,800/day)	¥75,600	\$657
Land Transportation (within Sapporo)	¥30,240	\$263
Land Transportation (from Sapporo to Sapporo/Chitose Airport)	¥43,200	\$376
Undertaker's Fees	¥54,000	\$470
White Clothing	¥6,480	\$56
Local Death Certificate (for unnatural death including postmortem)	¥70,000	\$609
Land Transportation (when death occurs outside Sapporo)	up to ¥400,000	up to \$3,478
Miscellaneous (incidental) expenses	¥108,000	\$939
Air Freight from Tokyo to U.S.:		
Honolulu (220 kg)	¥432,000	\$3,757
Los Angeles (220 kg)	¥545,143	\$4,740
Chicago & Dallas (220 kg)	¥596,571	\$5,188
New York (220 kg)	¥545,143	\$4,740
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Total: Honolulu	¥1,867,520	\$16,239
Los Angeles	¥1,980,663	\$17,223
Chicago & Dallas	¥2,032,091	\$17,670
New York	¥1,980,663	\$17,223

Required Documents (Shipment of Embalmed Remains to U.S.):

1. Consular Mortuary Certificate
2. Report of Death (DS-2060)
3. Copy of Local Japanese Death Certificate (required by Japanese Customs)

4. Mortician's Embalming Certificate (prepared by mortician)
5. Affidavit by Local Funeral Director (Certificate of Contents)
6. Copy of the Deceased's U.S. Passport
7. Regular Customs Declaration (required by Japanese customs; prepared by shipping agent)

3) LOCAL BURIAL OF ASHES:

	YEN	DOLLARS (¥115/\$)
Casket for Cremation	¥75,600	\$657
Cremation	¥43,200	\$376
Urn	¥28,080	\$244
Dry ice (7 days) (¥5,0400/day)	¥37,800	\$329
Mortuary (Funeral Hall for 7 days) (¥10,800/day)	¥75,600	\$657
Land Transportation (within Sapporo)	¥30,240	\$263
Plot with Marker	¥615,600	\$5,353
Undertaker's Fees	¥54,000	\$470
White Clothing	¥6,480	\$56
Local Death Certificate (for unnatural death including postmortem)	¥70,000	\$609
Land Transportation (when death occurs outside Sapporo)	up to ¥400,000	up to \$3,478
Miscellaneous (incidental) expenses	¥108,000	\$939
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Total:	¥1,544,600	\$13,431

7. Exhumation and Shipment

Exhumation of remains is rare in Japan because cremation is the customary practice for disposing of remains. Ashes are normally placed in an urn in the family vault and not buried. The only requirement for transfer of the urn is the approval of the priest of the temple or church which has jurisdiction over the locality of the family vault. In a municipal cemetery this person would be the city, town, or village officer in charge of the said cemetery.

8. Autopsies

There are three types of autopsies: 1) Judicial autopsy (for criminal investigation purpose by court order); 2) Administrative autopsy (no crimes are involved, but the cause of death is unknown); 3) Pathological autopsy or consent autopsy (at the request of the family).

Autopsies are not common in Japan when someone died of medical or natural cause. It is, therefore, very difficult to make an arrangement when the family wishes to have one. Only when death occurred under unusual circumstances, for example, if someone died in a house/apartment/hotel, the police are involved to determine whether there was foul play involved or not. If foul play was involved, the police obtain a court order for judicial autopsy. Once the police determine that a criminal act was not the cause of death, an autopsy is usually not performed in most of the cities, except for the Metropolitan Tokyo area where there exists the Tokyo Medical Examiner's Office, which performs an autopsy when the cause of death is not immediately known. There is no cost for judicial autopsy and administrative autopsy. However, the family may have to pay for the transportation from the facility where autopsies are performed to a funeral home. For consent autopsy, the family has to bear its cost which will be approximately \$3,000.

9. Local Customs Regarding Funerals, Disposition of Remains, Mourning, Memorial Services

Japanese funeral includes a wake, a funeral ceremony, the cremation of the deceased, a burial in a family grave, and a periodic memorial service. More than 99% of deceased Japanese are cremated, and buried in a family grave. At a wake, while the Buddhist priest reads a sutra, the family members, relatives and close friends offer incense in front of the deceased.

The funeral is usually on the day after the wake. The procedure is similar to the wake, and incense is offered while a priest chants a sutra. The funeral ceremony differs slightly as the deceased receives a new Buddhist name. A cremation usually takes about two hours, and the family members, relatives and close friends wait for the completion of the cremation at the crematorium. Japanese cremation procedures do not result in the same sized fine ash as it does in the United States and rather larger-sized pieces of bone. When

the cremation is completed, the family and relatives pick the bones out of the ashes and transfer them to the urn using chopsticks.

Mourners traditionally bring condolence money in a special black and silver decorated envelope. Depending on the relation to the deceased, this may be of a value equivalent to between 5,000 (\$44) and 30,000 yen (\$261).

10. Remarks

When death occurs under unusual circumstances (not natural death), medical provider's special treatment charges may be added to the medical bill. The Consulate General has seen a medical bill of a couple of hundreds of dollars to a couple of thousands of dollars depending on what kind of medical treatment was attempted even though the deceased was not revived.