

How to Transport a Dead Body by Plane

By Elizabeth Yuko Published July 17, 2019 | Comments (6)



Photo: Iliia Cherednychenko (Unsplash)

People die every day—and yes, that includes when they’re traveling. It’s not something most of us think about when planning a trip, but for some, it’s an unfortunate reality. But what do you do if you’re traveling with someone and they pass away? It’s not like you can *Weekend-at-Bernie’s* them and fly them back on their original coach ticket—so what are your options?

In short, it depends on the circumstances of the person’s death and where it happens. Though it’s important to remember that each situation is different, here are a few tips to help get you started.

Acknowledge your grief

If the deceased is a family member, friend, partner or colleague, you are likely in shock and grieving. According to Robert Quigley, M.D., senior vice president and regional medical director of International SOS, the world’s largest medical assistance and security company, your first step should be to address the fact that you’re grieving. “It’s important that you’re emotionally stable when you start this process, because the process is extremely complicated,” he tells Lifehacker.

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Take into consideration the circumstances surrounding the death

If there was any foul play suspected in the person’s death, then the authorities—meaning the local police or embassies—first need to sign off on any paperwork before the body is transported anywhere, Quigley explains. In this case, it could take weeks for the body to be released and cleared to travel.

But for the purpose of this article, let’s go with a hypothetical scenario that doesn’t involve foul play—like a relative having a sudden heart attack and dying while you are traveling together. More information on what to do in the case of a suspicious death—and pretty much every other scenario imaginable—is available in a detailed whitepaper from International SOS. The organization assists with the transport of approximately 2,500 deceased individuals each year, Quigley says, and has seen it all over the course of their 36 years in business.

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Connect with a local funeral home

If someone dies while traveling, they will likely end up at a local hospital where they will be pronounced dead by a doctor or medical examiner, who will then fill out the appropriate paperwork. Since you are not from the area, the hospital should be able to put you in touch with a local funeral home. From this point on, the funeral director will be your main point of contact in the process of transporting the person back home.

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If the death occurs abroad, Quigley says that there is huge variation in the quality of funeral homes and services around the world in terms of how they prepare and transport the bodies, taking into consideration different cultural and religious traditions. This includes factors like whether or not they embalm bodies, or if cremation is an option.

At this point, you may want to seek help from a medical assistance company like International SOS or Global Rescue to help you make local connections and the arrangements necessary for the remains to cross borders. Medical assistance companies work closely with insurers and hospitals to provide the medical services people may require while traveling—including in the event of their death. Like insurance policies, the cost of these services varies significantly, depending on where you’re traveling, your age, your health, the length of your trip and other factors. Your best bet is to either visit the company’s website or contact them directly for a quote.

If the death occurs in the United States and you are looking to transport the body to another location in the United States, it’s a little more straightforward.

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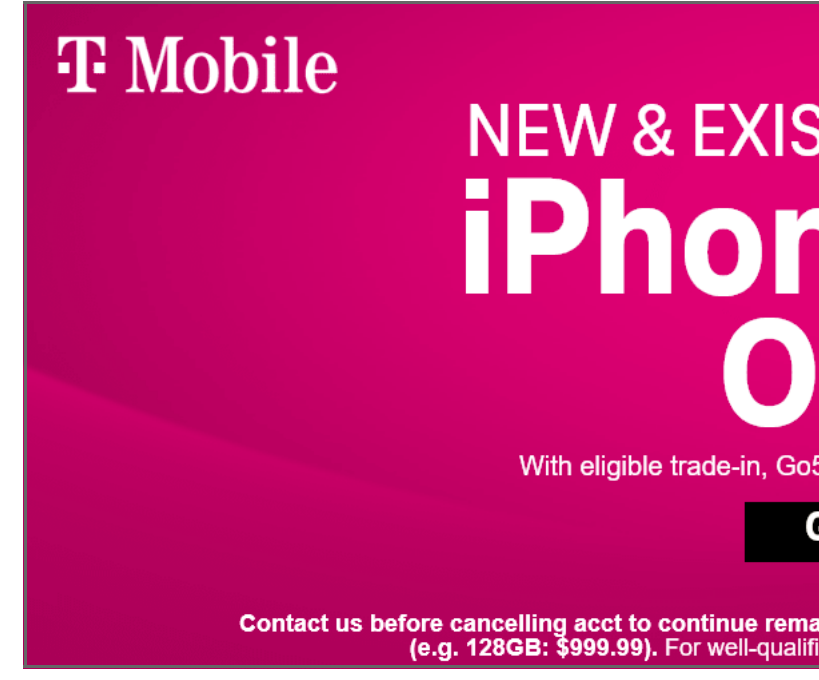


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