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Services

***MORTUARY SERVICES BENEFITS FOR
MEMBERS WHO DIE WHILE ON ACTIVE
DUTY***

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This pamphlet describes the various mortuary benefits you may be eligible for upon your death. The pamphlet also includes a mortuary planning sheet for your use in making funeral prearrangements (Attachment 1).

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

This document is substantially revised and must be completely reviewed.

1. Mortuary Services. Members who die while on active duty are authorized certain mortuary benefits. Recognizing the honorable, faithful service given our nation, the Air Force continues to care for its own, beyond life itself. The Air Force stands ready to assist and extend mortuary services benefits to the extent possible as permitted by law.

2. Deaths Occurring in the United States Excluding Hawaii. Benefits are provided to the next of kin (NOK) as follows:

2.1. Each active Air Force installation appoints a base mortuary affairs officer. This person is usually the Services Squadron Commander or Division Chief who administers and executes the program for the installation commander.

2.2. When an active duty member dies, the mortuary affairs officer nearest the place of death cares for the remains. The mortuary affairs officer may brief the NOK and obtain disposition instructions by telephone or personal visit depending on the distance between the mortuary affairs officer's location and the NOK's residence.

2.3. The mortuary affairs officer is responsible for the search, recovery, and identification of remains; the care and handling of remains; assisting the NOK (spouse and dependent children, or if the deceased was not married, the parents) with disposition arrangements and round-trip travel to the funeral; transportation of the remains; providing an escort; arranging for military honors at the place of burial; and return of all personal effects and property to the authorized recipient.

2.4. Titles 10 and 37, United States Code, specify the basis for all care of remains and assistance to NOK. Consequently, limitations, regardless of how emotional they may be, do apply.

3. Deaths Occurring Outside the United States Including Hawaii. If the NOK is overseas when the death occurs, the mortuary affairs officer briefs the NOK and obtains the instructions for the disposition of the remains.

3.1. Care and Return of Remains From Overseas.

3.1.1. The Air Force and the other services operate mortuaries in certain overseas locations for deaths occurring in the geographic areas served by those mortuaries.

3.1.2. As soon as the overseas mortuary receives the remains, they care for the remains as expeditiously as possible and promptly return them to the Continental United States (CONUS) port mortuary. However, when a death occurs overseas, there is a lapse of several days before the remains arrive at CONUS port of entry mortuary facility (Dover AFB DE or Travis AFB CA). There are several reasons for the lapse time:

3.1.2.1. Upon the death, local civil authorities may hold the remains for a period of at least a day or more for their investigative purposes and to provide the required documents to move the remains out of country.

3.1.2.2. When the host foreign nation or United States military medical authorities require an autopsy, this can take another day or two.

3.1.2.3. Transferring the remains to the responsible military mortuary and preparing (embalming) them for movement to the CONUS usually takes 24 to 36 hours.

3.1.2.4. The overseas mortuary places the embalmed remains in an aluminum transfer case for transfer from the overseas mortuary to the CONUS port of entry mortuary facility. The overseas mortuary arranges for the return of the remains to the United States on the first available Air Mobility Command aircraft bound for the CONUS port. The remains could leave the same day they are released by the mortuary or the next day, depending on the availability and scheduling of the aircraft. Therefore, another day's time is expended in the return of the remains. Additionally, there may be further delay shipping the remains due to weather or maintenance problems.

3.2. CONUS Port Mortuary Operations.

3.2.1. Upon arrival at the port mortuary facility, the remains are reprocessed and prepared for onward movement to final destination within a 24-hour period.

3.2.2. The port mortuary personnel perform the following actions:

3.2.2.1. Administer additional treatment, to include wrapping nonviewable remains, performing restorative artwork, applying cosmetics, and dressing viewable remains.

3.2.2.2. Place the remains in the Armed Forces specification casket selected by the NOK, and encase the casket in an outer shipping container.

3.2.2.3. Obtain a military escort for the remains or receive and accommodate a special escort named by the NOK. Brief the escort on his or her special duties and provide proper documents.

3.2.2.4. Prepare all necessary documents and permits.

3.2.2.5. Arrange for a commercial airline flight schedule or hearse delivery for the remains and the escort to the final destination.

3.2.3. At the request of the NOK, the port mortuary officer will arrange to have the remains cremated. The cremated remains (the remaining bone fragments after the cremation process is completed) are placed in the Armed Services specification urn selected by the NOK. The escort will hand carry the urn to final destination.

4. Mortuary Services Benefits.

4.1. When remains are recovered and individually identified, the NOK may have the Air Force accomplish the following through its contract funeral home (or government operated overseas mortuary).

4.1.1. Remove the remains from the place of death or the place where authorities release the remains to the contract funeral home.

4.1.2. Prepare (embalming) the remains.

4.1.3. Dress the remains and applying cosmetics.

4.1.4. Casket the remains. The NOK may select one of two Armed Services specification caskets.

4.1.4.1. An 18-gauge metal sealer casket. The exterior is silver to gray (silver tone) in color. The interior of the casket is equipped with an adjustable innerspring mattress, and the casket is upholstered with a white crepe fabric.

4.1.4.2. A solid hardwood casket. The exterior is walnut in color. The interior of the casket is equipped with an adjustable innerspring mattress, and the casket is upholstered with a rose tan crepe fabric. **NOTE:** A choice of casket is available only when death was not due to severe trauma where dressing of the remains is not possible. In such a situation, the Air Force automatically provides the 18-gauge metal sealer casket.

4.1.5. Provide an outer shipping container for the casket. This is to protect the casketed remains while in transit by commercial airline or rail. Air Force authorities determine whether transportation for the remains will be by commercial airline, rail, or hearse. The Air Force provides all of the above at no cost to the NOK.

4.2. If the NOK prefers to make his or her own arrangements for the above items, he or she may do so, but this alternative applies in the United States only. The mortuary affairs officer will provide the current monetary allowances for this option during the mortuary briefing.

4.2.1. The Air Force will reimburse the NOK up to the amount it would have cost the Air Force to obtain and provide the items under contract or if there is no contract in effect, a specific allowance is available to help defray those expenses.

4.2.2. Reimbursement for transportation of the remains will not exceed what it would have cost the Air Force to effect shipment of the remains.

5. Remains Disposition Options. The NOK may elect to effect disposition by one of the following options. (The mortuary officer provides monetary allowances for each option in the entitlements briefing.)

5.1. Option 1. Consign the remains directly to a national cemetery. This means there would be no funeral home used and there would be no funeral service. Since there would be no expenses incurred at the national cemetery, the NOK is reimbursed a limited sum to help pay for an expense such as the purchase of a floral arrangement, acknowledgment cards, newspaper notice, and so forth.

5.2. Option 2. Consign the remains to a funeral home selected by the NOK to conduct desired visitations and services, followed by interment in a national cemetery. Since expenses would be incurred with the funeral home, the NOK may be reimbursed a limited sum to help pay for expenses, such as the professional fee of a funeral director; use of the funeral home and equipment; motor vehicles (limousines, floral delivery vehicle, lead car, car for the clergy); purchase of a burial vault, a grave liner, or a concrete box; religious item for the casket; flowers; register book; prayer cards; acknowledgment cards; funeral programs; newspaper and radio notices; clergy honorarium and music (organist, vocalist), and so forth.

5.3. Option 3. Consign the remains to a funeral home selected by the NOK to conduct desired visitations and services followed by interment in a nongovernment (private) cemetery. Since expenses would be incurred at both the funeral home and the cemetery, the NOK may be reimbursed a limited sum to help pay for expenses already specified in Option 2 and cemetery expenses such as purchase of a single grave space, opening and closing of the grave, use of cemetery equipment, purchase of a headstone from a commercial monument company, and so forth.

5.4. Option 4. Cremation of the remains in the area where death occurred or at final destination. The Air Force provides the NOK a choice of two Armed Forces specification urns, a solid American black walnut urn or a solid bronze urn, cube like in design with the US Air Force seal affixed to the urn and engraving of the name, grade, date of birth, and date of death.

5.4.1. Cremation may be accomplished by the Air Force in the area where death occurred at no expense to the NOK. This includes the following:

5.4.1.1. Casketing the remains in a solid hardwood casket to accommodate cremation, the actual cremation itself.

5.4.1.2. Placement of the cremated remains (the remaining bone fragments after the cremation process is completed) in the urn selected by the next of kin.

5.4.1.3. The escort will hand carry the urn to the destination specified by the next of kin.

5.4.2. Cremation at final destination. By necessity, the remains would be casketed in a solid hardwood casket as previously described. The NOK may be reimbursed in the amount it would have cost the Air Force had it arranged for the cremation, transportation to the crematory, crematory charge, cost of the urn and engraving thereof.

5.4.3. In either of the above, the mode of disposition for the cremated remains, such as Option 1, 2, or 3, is coupled to the option selected so the previously specified allowance would apply accordingly. Example: The NOK elects to have the Air Force accomplish the cremation. The

NOK selects a bronze urn for placement of the cremated remains and has the cremated remains sent to a funeral home. The funeral home conducts the services. The urn is interred in a nongovernment (private) cemetery. According to this mode of disposition, the NOK will receive a substantial allowance to help pay for expenses incurred at the funeral home and the cemetery. **NOTE:** The available allowances are to reimburse the NOK for authorized expenses actually incurred. Any expenses exceeding the specified maximum allowance must be borne by the NOK.

6. Interment Flag and Flag Case. A United States of America flag is provided to drape the casket. Additionally, a solid hardwood flag case is provided. At the end of the graveside service, the flag is folded and presented to the next of kin. The flag case is provided prior to departure from the cemetery.

7. Escort for the Remains.

7.1. Special Escort . The NOK may request, by name, a special escort to accompany the remains to final destination.

7.1.1. A special escort is any person named by the NOK. This can be a relative, a close friend, someone presently on active duty, a retired person, or a civilian.

7.1.2. The Air Force pays for the special escort's round-trip travel and per diem.

7.2. Military Escort. If the NOK desires no special escort, the mortuary affairs officer designates a military escort to accompany the remains to the final destination.

8. Military Honors.

8.1. Military honors are furnished at the place of burial, if possible. Military honors consist of pallbearers, firing party, bugler, color guard, and an Air Force chaplain, if specifically requested by your NOK.

8.2. Flyover. If you are a "commissioned officer" and hold an aeronautical rating, or pursuing a course of instruction leading to such a rating at the time of death, your NOK may request a flyover at the place of burial. The performance of a flyover depends on the availability of tactical aircraft at the given time and date, minimum weather, and approvals for the required air space.

9. Veterans Administration Benefits.

9.1. The Veterans Administration will provide a government headstone free of cost to mark the grave. The type and style headstone depends on the requirement or restrictions specified by the cemetery concerned.

9.2. You may be interred in a national cemetery. Your spouse may also be buried in the same grave site.

10. NOK Funeral Travel. The NOK (spouse and dependent children, or if the deceased was not married, the parents) receive round-trip travel at Air Force expense to attend the funeral. The mortuary affairs officer will assist the travelers in making proper travel arrangements. Following the travel, the Air Force helps the NOK complete and submit a travel voucher for payment of limited per diem.

11. Disposition of Personal Property. The mortuary affairs officer is responsible for the return of all personal effects and property to the authorized recipient, as specified by law. A summary court officer is

appointed to safeguard, collect, inventory, and ship the property to a destination specified by the recipient. As a matter of information, the recipient for the property is not always the same person who is directing disposition for the remains. The family structure of the deceased and marital status at the time of death are governing factors in applying the law as to who is the recipient for the property.

12. Death Certificate. The Air Force Casualty Assistance Division, located at Headquarters Air Force Personnel Center (HQ AFPC), Randolph AFB TX 78148, publishes DD Form 1300, **Report of Casualty**, which in effect, is an Air Force death certificate. The DD Form 1300 is used in lieu of certified copies of the civilian death certificate when proof of death is required for submissions of claims, etc. The cost for the certified copies is a personal expense not payable by the Air Force.

13. Available Benefits When Remains Are Recovered But Cannot Be Individually Identified by Scientific Means. This circumstance requires the Air Force to arrange and effect a group burial for those remains that are not individually identified. The Air Force will do the following:

- 13.1. Casket remains in specification metal sealer caskets. The number of caskets is predicated on the volume of remains, not the number of persons included in the group burial.
- 13.2. Select a national cemetery most centrally located to all primary NOK (spouse or parents as applicable).
- 13.3. Arrange and pay for the round trip travel of NOK, spouse and children or parents as applicable, and two other persons closely related to the deceased to attend the funeral.
- 13.4. Assign an escort to accompany each casket that will be used.
- 13.5. Present a flag of the United States of America that draped the casket to each surviving spouse and parents of the deceased.
- 13.6. Conducts a nondenominational interment service.
- 13.7. Provide full military honors. Details pertaining to military honors are contained in paragraph 8.1.
- 13.8. Provide a specially fabricated headstone to mark the group burial site.
- 13.9. Provide each primary NOK with a specified allowance to help pay limited expenses that may be incurred for the interment service. This may be for the purchase of a floral arrangement, acknowledgment cards, etc.
- 13.10. Provide the NOK with an 8" x 10" color photograph of the special headstone.
- 13.11. Return personal property and effects to the authorized recipient, as specified by law.

14. Available Benefits When Remains Are Not Recovered. This situation may be due to the type of incident that occurred or prevailing conditions at the scene, rendering the remains nonrecoverable. Whatever the case, this circumstance precludes any funeral service and disposition of remains, so the Air Force will assist the NOK in arranging a memorial service with Air Force participation.

- 14.1. Memorial Service.** The memorial service may be conducted at a place selected by the NOK to include a place of worship, a funeral home, a cemetery (national or private), or a combination thereof.

14.1.1. Military honors will be provided at the place of service. The extent of those honors depends on the NOK's desires. If the deceased is a commissioned officer who held an aeronautical rating, the NOK may request a flyover.

14.1.2. At the conclusion of the service, a flag of the United States of America is presented to the surviving spouse and the decedent's parents.

14.2. NOK Funeral Travel. Round trip travel will be provided at Air Force expense to attend the memorial service arranged by the NOK. Travel is authorized for the surviving spouse and children, or if no spouse, the decedent's parents.

14.3. Memorial Marker. The Veterans Administration provides a memorial marker which may be placed in a national cemetery or private cemetery.

14.4. Memorial Service Allowance. The Air Force will provide the NOK a memorial service allowance to help pay for expenses, such as the professional fee of a funeral director; use of the funeral home and equipment; motor vehicles (limousines, floral delivery vehicles, lead car, car for the clergy); purchase of a casket, grave site, and associated expenses; religious items; register book; prayer cards; acknowledgment cards; service programs; flowers; newspaper and radio notices; clergy honorarium and music (organist, vocalist); and so forth.

14.5. Personal Property. The Air Force will return personal effects and property to the authorized recipient as specified by law.

15. Future Planning. A "Mortuary Planning Sheet for Active Duty Air Force Members." is provided in attachment 1. Thoughtful review and discussion of the items contained on this planning sheet with immediate family members can result in a much better prepared NOK in the unfortunate event of death. Take the time to carefully review the items. Keep this with insurance policies and other important documents. Questions concerning benefits or discussions about mortuary matters can be handled by the base mortuary affairs officer.

WILLIAM P. HALLIN, Lt. Gen, USAF
DCS/Installations & Logistics

Attachment 1

MORTUARY PLANNING SHEET FOR ACTIVE DUTY AIR FORCE MEMBERS

TO THE NEXT OF KIN OF _____.

This is not intended as a legal or binding document. It is only an expression of my preferences and desires regarding the disposition of my remains upon my death. Please recognize that this was done primarily to make things easier for you and to let you know my thoughts.

A1. At the time of my death, I prefer:

Traditional Burial Cremation

A1.1. I feel it would be best if preparation, casketing, and transportation were arranged and handled by:
The Air Force

My next of kin working with funeral home of their choice

A1.2. Casket Selection

18-Gauge Metal Sealer Casket Solid Hardwood Casket

A1.3. Urn Selection (if applicable):

Solid Walnut Urn Solid Bronze Urn

A1.4. My preference for burial is:

Private Cemetery: _____

Name and Address

National / Other Government Cemetery: _____

(Contingent on the availability of space) _____

Name and Address

A1.5.. If cremation is desired, mark one of the disposition items below:

Bury my cremains (cremated remains) in the cemetery named above.

Place my cremains in a columbarium in the cemetery named above
(This is the placement of the urn in an above ground closure.)

Retain my cremains at home.

Scatter my cremains at _____.

A1.6. My remains should be consigned to the funeral home designated below for services prior to interment in the cemetery named above.

NOTE: To assist you, the base mortuary affairs officer has a national directory of funeral directors which contains the names and addresses of funeral homes.

Name, address, and _____
phone number of _____
funeral home _____

A1.7. Burial in Uniform (check one)
do desire do not desire have no preference.

A1.8. Interment receptacle (check one):

Vault Concrete Box None (if not required by the cemetery)

A1.9. Services I desire: (More than one may be marked)

Church Services _____

(Name and address of church or chapel) _____

Funeral home services

Graveside Services

Other (Specify) _____

No Preference

A1.10. Military honors desired (if available from Air Force resources): Mark those desired:

Air Force Chaplain Firing Party

Pallbearers Color Guard

Bugler *Flyover

* Flyovers are only authorized for commissioned officers who held an aeronautical rating or who were taking a course of instruction leading to such a rating and who died while on active duty.

A1.11. Government-furnished headstone or marker:

Yes No Preferred Type _____

A1.12. Clergy (Specify Preference): _____

A1.13. Music and Scriptures (Specify Preference): _____

A1.14. Flowers, memorials, agencies to which contributions may be made, or other special requests (Specify): _____

A1.15. * Friends to Notify: _____

* This is not a substitute for DD Form 93, Record of Emergency Data. Please update your DD Form 93 as your marital or family situation changes. Keep it current at all times--this is the only way you can be certain the Air Force will notify the proper parties if you have a serious illness, injury, or untimely death.

A1.16. The nearest base is _____ AFB and the Mortuary Office phone number is _____. (If this information is not available to you, please call the Air Force Mortuary Services Office, 1-800-531-5803.

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____