



**GOVERNMENT OF SAMOA**

**HUMAN REMAINS REPATRIATION  
POLICY 2016**

**Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet**

**SUBJECT: POLICY ON REPATRIATION OF DECEASED BODIES, HUMAN BONES  
AND CREMAINS INTO SAMOA**

**BACKGROUND:**

This Policy seeks to bring about a more comprehensive coordinated approach by mainstreaming key roles, functions and procedures of relevant government Agencies involved in the repatriation of human remains to Samoa. These Agencies include the **Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Agriculture (Quarantine Services) and Ministry of Revenue (Customs Services)**. To accommodate the costly administrative services associated with the process; this policy will also seek to incur an administrative fee which can either be paid locally to the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, or directly to government's overseas Mission Offices where applications have been lodged.

The administrative services provided by our Missions abroad are executed free of cost thus making the whole process very expensive for Government. Statistics confirmed that the average number of cases approved for the repatriation of deceased human bodies on a yearly basis is forty (40). This in turn means that over the last five (5) years the total number of requests received and approved by the Ministry of Health equates to a total of two hundred (200), and all of these requests are from Samoan Citizens residing abroad.

There is no Legislation governing provision of this service, which would make this process simpler and straightforward in the future. Thus this policy may form basis for developing a legal framework that binds the key procedures and processes for the implementation of this policy. The policy however is drawn from existing relevant legislation administered by various government Ministries and Corporations.

These are some of the issues that were associated with the initiation of the policy:

- Delay in response as a result of not providing all required documents;
- Lengthy process in the current practice used at the moment;
- Individual modes of approval from the Ministry of Health (MOH) & the Ministry of the Prime Minister & Cabinet (MPMC);
- No formal procedure from Customs & Quarantine
- Extensive administration services provided for free by Samoa's Overseas Missions
- Eligibility for burial in Samoa
- Introduction of an Administrative Fee

**The current procedure in place is as follows:**

- i. The Ministry of Health has a standard procedure before and during the arrival of the deceased at Faleolo Airport;
  - Family of the deceased should provide an official letter of request via Embassy Office or Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade (MFAT) to the Director General /CEO Health to grant an approval further to the assessment and verification of the following documents:

- Medical cause of Death Certificate
- Embalming Certificate from mortuary or any funeral services provider
- Cremation Certificate from mortuary or any funeral services provider
- Death Registry Certificate
  - Coroner's report (*predominantly cases that the cause of death is confirmed to be an infectious disease*)
- MOH representative will assess all relevant documents at the airport upon arrival at international ports of Samoa or electronically sent via email prior to date of transportation.
- ii. The Quarantine Office has to be informed if the deceased or human remains will be accompanied by natural flowers, fine mats and/or tapa cloth or other regulated articles;
- iii. The Quarantine Office has to be notified if the cause of death for the deceased or human remains resulted from zoonotic disease(s) to ensure that veterinary advice is sought
- iv. Customs Office will play its role upon the arrival of the deceased;
- v. Negotiations on the arrangement of the arrival is done by two (2) Funeral Parlors

#### **PURPOSE:**

The main purpose of this policy is to consolidate the process and procedures for the repatriation of deceased bodies, human remains (bones) and human cremated ashes into Samoa.

#### **SCOPE:**

This policy covers the process for the (i) the Repatriation to Samoa of Deceased Bodies (ii) Disinterment of Deceased Human Bones, (iii) Cremains

#### **MANDATE:**

This policy was developed in view of relevant provisions of the following legislation of Samoa.

- Burial Ordinance 1961
- Fatal Accidents Act 1974
- Food Act 2015
- Health Ordinance 1959
- Ministry of Health Act 2006
- Occupational Health & Safety Act 2002
- Poison Act 1968
- International Health Regulation Act 2005
- Quarantine (Biodiversity) Act 2005
- Customs Act 2014

#### **1.0 COORDINATED PROCESS**

As the coordinating agency, the **Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (MPMC)** will coordinate this policy in collaboration with other government agencies including the Ministry of

Health, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries; Quarantine Division and the Ministry of Revenue; Customs Division in carrying out all the necessary coordinated actions for the implementation of this policy. The MPMC will liaise with overseas Missions upon receiving requests for the repatriation of human remains into Samoa, and then disseminate the request to all the respective stakeholders for their assessments and approval. Thereon, upon receipt of approval from all stakeholders, the Ministry will issue a letter of approval for entrance of the aforementioned elements at all regulated ports of entry and collect the administrative fee. The administrative fee will be charged and collected by MPMC for the services rendered by all the respective stakeholders in the implementation of this policy. The Coordinated Process is as follows:

- i. The family of the deceased should contact family members in Samoa to liaise with the MPMC who will coordinate the approval process.
- ii. The family of the deceased abroad is required to provide all relevant documents provided in *part 2.0; (set of requirements)*
- iii. These documents should be sent to the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (MPMC) and directed to the Chief Executive Officer; (*refer to Contact List*). Alternatively these can be channeled through Mission Offices.
- iv. Upon receipt by MPMC, these are then submitted to the relevant Agencies Ministry of Health, Customs and Quarantine for clearance;
- v. The normal process to facilitate all the necessary paperwork by the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet will take 3-5 working days;
- vi. Administrative fee of \$100 will be charged before issuance of letter of approval;
- vii. Administrative fee is payable here in Samoa to the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet or to the Missions abroad in local currency;
- viii. A family member of the deceased in Samoa can uplift the approval letter to their family. Alternatively the MPMC can send it the corresponding Mission office for dispatching.

***Arrival at Samoa's regulated ports of entry:***

- x. There will be representatives of Government Boarder Agencies at regulated ports performing their respective clearance procedures pertaining to the arrival of the deceased body;
- xi. Upon arrival, clearance will be carried out after clearing the normal operation of arrivals;
- xii. The Airline is responsible for submitting an Airway Bill/Bill of Landing for Customs and Quarantine Clearance;

- xiii. Family member(s) accompanying the deceased will present the approval letter to the officials.

## 2.0 SET OF REQUIREMENTS/ DOCUMENTATION

### 1. DECEASED BODIES:

- i. Official Letter of Request by the Deceased Family to the CEO, MPMC. The letter should clearly state what the family wishes to repatriate into Samoa whether it be a deceased body, human remains, or ashes;
- ii. Medical Cause of Death;
- iii. Embalming Certificate from Mortuary or Funeral Parlor;
- iv. Death Registry Certificate;
- v. Coroner's report
  - *predominantly cases that the cause of death is confirmed to be an infectious disease*
  - *MOH to determine date/time of burial based on the Coroner's report.*
- vi. Deceased family to declare within the Letter of Request if the deceased is accompanied by any natural or fresh flowers, tapa or fine mats and the casket is made of treated woods;
  - *for Quarantine clearance*
- vii. Identification: passport photo, or ID or National ID, or Birth Certificate. .

### 2. DECEASED HUMAN REMAINS (BONES):

- i. The family or person(s) should submit a letter of request address to the DG/CEO/MOH
  - a. The letter should clearly state the **name of the deceased, date of burial, proposed date for disinterment and new place the human remains will be buried.**
- ii. The bones must be chemically sterilized by a registered funeral service provider before the human remains are hermetically sealed;
- iii. The family or person(s) must obtain the report of the treatment process from the funeral services and attached with letter of request;
- iv. The Principal Health Care Ways Officer under the Ministry of Health will then assess all requests before issuance of an approval.

3. **CREMAINS:**

- i. Cremation certificate from mortuary or Funeral Parlor

### 3.0 SAMOA GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS CONTACTS

#### 1. Ministry of the Prime Minister & Cabinet: Immigration Division

*Address: Level 4, FMFMII Building Eleele Fou, Apia Samoa;*

##### **Chief Executive Officer**

Email: [shem.leo@mpmc.gov.ws](mailto:shem.leo@mpmc.gov.ws)  
Office Phone: (0685) 20136  
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##### **Assistant Chief Executive Officer**

Email: [siaopo.pese@mpmc.gov.ws](mailto:siaopo.pese@mpmc.gov.ws)  
Office Phone: (0685) 25474  
Fax: (0685) 22243

#### 2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade:

*Address: Level 3, FMFMII Building Eleele Fou, Apia Samoa;*

##### **Chief Executive Officer**

Email: [noumea@mfat.gov.ws](mailto:noumea@mfat.gov.ws)  
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##### **Assistant Chief Executive Officer: Corporate & Overseas Mission Division**

Email: [palepa@mfat.gov.ws](mailto:palepa@mfat.gov.ws)  
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##### **Manager Overseas Mission Support Services**

Email: [luputo@mfat.gov.ws](mailto:luputo@mfat.gov.ws)  
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#### 3. Ministry of Health: Health Protection & Enforcement Division

*Address: Motootua, Ifiifi Street, Apia Samoa;*

##### **Chief Executive Officer**

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Fax: (0685) 26553

##### **Assistant Chief Executive Officer**

Email: [ualesis@health.gov.ws](mailto:ualesis@health.gov.ws)  
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**Principal Health Care Ways Officer**

Email: [lamekot@health.gov.ws](mailto:lamekot@health.gov.ws)

Office Phone: (0685) 68100/68124

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**4. Ministry for Revenue: Samoa Customs Services**

*Address: Matautu Tai, Apia Samoa*

**Chief Executive Officer**

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Office Phone: (0685) 21561

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**Assistant Chief Executive Officer**

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**5. Ministry of Agriculture: Samoa Quarantine Services**

*Address: Matautu Tai, Apia Samoa*

**Chief Executive Officer**

Email: [fono@maf.gov.ws](mailto:fono@maf.gov.ws)

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**Assistant Chief Executive Officer- Quarantine Division**

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**Senior Quarantine Officer- Faleolo Airport**

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**Principal Quarantine Officer- Border**

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