

**BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY
OF THE AIR FORCE**

AIR FORCE PAMPHLET 34-506

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Services



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

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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This pamphlet describes the various mortuary benefits you may be eligible for upon your Death and includes a mortuary planning sheet for your use in making funeral prearrangements. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) using the AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF Form 847s from the field through the appropriate functional's chain of command. This publication may be supplemented at any level, but all direct Supplements must be routed to the OPR of this publication for coordination prior to certification and approval. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with (IAW) AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) located at <https://www.my.af.mil/afrims/afrims/afrims/rims.cfm>

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This document is substantially revised. It has been changed from AFPAM 34-261 to AFPAM 34-506. Other changes include updates to the mortuary services and entitlements of members who die on active duty and added those that are in active duty status.

1. Mortuary Services. Members who die while on active duty or in active duty status (IAW Title 10 United States Code Section 1481) are authorized certain mortuary benefits. Recognizing the honorable, faithful service given to our nation, the Air Force continues to care for its own and stands ready to assist and extend mortuary services benefits to the extent possible as permitted by

law. Following official notification, the person you have designated as the person authorized to direct disposition (PADD), of your remains, will be briefed by a mortuary officer.

1.1. The PADD is the individual predetermined by you to direct disposition of your remains as indicated on DD Form 93, *Record of Emergency Data*, or virtual Record Emergency Data (vRED). If for any reason the PADD is not predetermined by you on DD Form 93 or vRED or if the PADD waives his/her right to direct disposition, this role will automatically fall upon the next of kin (NOK) based upon order of precedence delineated in Title 10 United States Code Section 1482 (spouse, children over 18 in order of age, parent or legal guardian, siblings, grandparents, and so forth).

2. Deaths Occurring in the United States Including Alaska and Hawaii. Entitlements are provided to the PADD as follows:

2.1. Each active Air Force installation appoints a mortuary officer (MO) who administers and executes the mortuary program for the installation commander. The MO will be the Force Support Squadron (FSS) Commander and the alternate mortuary officers will be the FSS Deputy and/or Operations Officer.

2.2. When an active duty member dies and Air Force Casualty confirms that all notifications are complete, the MO nearest the place of death will brief the PADD and obtain disposition instructions by telephone or personal visit depending on the distance between the MO and the location of the PADD.

2.3. The MO is responsible for the search, recovery, and identification of remains; the care and handling of remains; assisting the PADD with disposition arrangements; 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 person eligible to receive effects (PERE). Additionally, the MO will arrange travel to and from the place of final disposition for all authorized travelers.

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 Excluding Alaska and Hawaii. When a death occurs Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS), the location of the PADD is the determining factor as to where the MO support will be assigned. Either the installation MO or a MO from the Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operation Center, Mortuary Affairs Division (AFMAO/MA) will brief the PADD and obtain their instructions for the disposition of the fallen.

3.1. Care and Return of Remains From OCONUS.

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 fallen, they care for them as expeditiously as possible and promptly return them to the Continental United States (CONUS). However, when a death occurs overseas, there is a lapse of several days before the remains arrive at a CONUS port of entry, AFMAO Port Mortuary, Dover AFB, DE or receiving funeral home. 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. This timeline can be extended due to holidays or weekends in which they choose not to complete their investigation and release the fallen.
 - 3.1.2.3. Transferring the remains to the responsible military mortuary and preparing (embalming) them for movement to 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 mortuary or a military specification casket for transfer directly to a receiving funeral home. The overseas mortuary arranges for the return of the remains to the United States on either the first available Air Mobility Command (AMC) aircraft bound for the CONUS port or on a commercial aircraft. 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. Weather or maintenance problems may provide additional delays.
- 3.2. CONUS Port Mortuary Operations.
- 3.2.1. Upon arrival at the port mortuary facility, the remains are processed or reprocessed and prepared for onward movement to final destination usually within a 48-hour period.
 - 3.2.2. The port mortuary personnel perform the following actions:
 - 3.2.2.1. Process or reprocess remains and administer additional treatment, to include wrapping non-viewable remains, performing restorative artwork, applying cosmetics, and dressing viewable remains.
 - 3.2.2.2. Ensures the fallen is placed in the Armed Forces specification casket selected by the PADD, and encases the casket in an outer shipping container (air tray).
 - 3.2.2.3. Brief the military or special escort on his or her duties and provide proper documents. If an escort is not identified, the Port Mortuary will appoint one of equal or higher rank.
 - 3.2.2.4. Prepare all necessary documents, permits and performs final quality assurance inspection prior to departure.
 - 3.2.2.5. Schedules military/contract military air, commercial air, or hearse delivery to transport the remains and escort to the final destination.
 - 3.2.3. When the PADD requests cremation, the MO will provide a cremation permit and the specification urn selected by the PADD.

4. Mortuary Services Benefits.

- 4.1. When remains are recovered and individually identified, the PADD may direct 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. Wrap non-viewable remains and position remains and uniform in the casket or restore, cosmetize, dress, and casket viewable remains.
- 4.1.4. The PADD may select one of two Armed Services specification caskets.
 - 4.1.4.1. An 18-gauge metal protective casket. The exterior is silver, silver tone or gray in color. The interior of the casket is equipped with an adjustable innerspring mattress, and the casket is upholstered with a white or eggshell 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 or ecru crepe fabric.
- 4.1.5. Provide an outer shipping container (air tray) for the casket. This is to protect the casket while in transit.

Note: The Air Force provides all items of service or merchandise listed above at no cost to the PADD.

- 4.2. If the PADD prefers to make his or her own arrangements for the above items, he or she may do so, but this alternative is generally limited to deaths occurring within the United States due to the complexity involved in the transportation of remain when outside the United States. The MO will provide the current monetary allowances for this option during the mortuary briefing.
 - 4.2.1. The Air Force will reimburse the PADD up to the maximum authorized amount for Option 5, which includes all associated funeral and cemetery expenses.
 - 4.2.2. In addition, the Air Force will reimburse all expenses for the transportation of remains.

5. Remains Disposition Options. The PADD may elect to effect disposition by one of the following options. The mortuary officer provides monetary reimbursement allowances for each option in the entitlements briefing. The reimbursement amounts are not published due to continued adjustments in the entitlements. The MO will provide the current entitlements at the time of the PADD briefing.

- 5.1. **Option 1.** Consign the remains directly to a government 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 government cemetery, the PADD 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 PADD to conduct desired visitations and services, followed by interment in a government cemetery. Since expenses would be incurred with the funeral home, the PADD 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 for a visitation and funeral service, motor vehicles (limousines, floral delivery vehicle, lead car, car for the clergy), purchase of a burial vault or grave liner,

religious item for the casket, flowers, register book, prayer cards, acknowledgment cards, funeral programs, newspaper notice, clergy honorarium and music (organist, vocalist), and so forth.

5.3. **Option 3.** Consign the remains to a funeral home selected by the PADD to conduct desired visitations and services followed by interment in a non-government (private) cemetery. Since expenses would be incurred at both the funeral home and the cemetery, the PADD 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, outer burial container, 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.** Consign the fallen to a funeral home, selected by the PADD, to conduct desired arrangements that can include a visitation and services followed by cremation.

5.4.1. The fallen will be prepared and placed in a solid hardwood casket. The casket will be draped in a US Burial Flag and escorted to the receiving funeral home.

5.4.2. The receiving funeral home will perform the cremation in accordance with statutory provisions and the Air Force will assume the cost.

5.4.3. The Air Force provides the PADD a choice of two Armed Forces specification urns, a solid walnut urn or bronze urn. Each are cube-like in design with the US Air Force seal affixed and either will be engraved with the name, grade, date of birth, and date of death of the fallen.

5.4.3.1. The receiving funeral home will ensure the cremated remains (the skeletal remains collected for processing after the cremation is complete) in the urn selected by the next of kin.

6. Interment Flag(s) and Flag Case(s). A United States of America flag and a solid hardwood flag case will be presented to those listed in paragraphs 6.1 through 6.4 at the conclusion of the service.

6.1. Spouse

6.2. Children

6.3. The father and mother (if not the primary next of kin). If legally separated or divorced, each parent will receive a flag.

6.4. The PADD if not already covered in paragraphs 6.1 through 6.3

7. Escort for the Remains.

7.1. Special Escort. The PADD 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 PADD. This can be a relative, a close friend, someone presently on active duty, a retired military member, or a civilian.

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

7.2. Appointed Escort. If the PADD desires no special escort, the mortuary officer designates a military escort of equivalent or higher rank to accompany the remains to the final destination. All efforts will be made to utilize a member of the deceased unit.

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 the PADD.

8.2. Flyover. If you are serving as a rated officer or enlisted aircrew member and hold an aeronautical rating on an active duty status, or pursuing a course of instruction leading to such a rating at the time of death, your PADD may request a flyover at the place of burial. The performance of a flyover depends on the availability of aircraft at the given time and date, minimum weather requirements, 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 of headstone depends on the requirement or restrictions specified by the cemetery concerned.

9.2. Veterans may be interred in a national cemetery. A veteran's spouse and dependent children may also be buried in the same grave site. The MO will discuss the limitations in detail during the PADD briefing.

10. NOK Funeral Travel. Authorized travelers to include spouse, dependent children, parents (including step-parents), the parents of the spouse of the member, siblings of the deceased, and the PADD, if different from those listed above, may receive round-trip travel at Air Force expense to attend the funeral. If, other than the PADD, there are no other travelers from the list above, the PADD may choose two persons closely related to the deceased. Additionally, an individual may be authorized to travel to serve as an attendant for small children or a handicapped traveler when none of those listed are traveling the same route. The MO will assist the travelers in making proper travel arrangements. Following travel, the Air Force will help the authorized travelers complete and submit a travel voucher for payment of limited per diem.

11. Disposition of Personal Property. The MO is responsible for the return of all personal effects and property to the eligible 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 person eligible to receive effects (PERE) 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.

12.1. For deaths occurring in the United States, the PADD will be provided ten (10) copies of a certified state death certificate. Additional copies may be provided at the PADD's expense. The contract funeral home will obtain death certificates as part of their contractual requirements. Families may contact the Office of Vital Statistics in the county where the death occurred should additional copies be needed in the future.

12.2. For deaths occurring outside the United States and its territories, the PADD will be provided ten (10) copies of the DD 1300, *Report of Casualty* and/or certified copies of the DD 2064, *Certificate of Death (Overseas)*. The DD 1300 may be used in lieu of a death certificate when proof of death is established and no remains are recovered. The State Department may also issue a Report of Death Abroad for unique circumstances.

13. Available Benefits When Remains Are Recovered But Cannot Be Individually Identified by Scientific Means (Group Burial). 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 protective caskets. The number of caskets is predicated on the volume of remains, not the number of persons included in the group burial.

13.2. Arrange the interment to be effected in Arlington National Cemetery.

13.3. Arrange and pay for the round trip travel of authorized travelers as described by paragraph **10.** to attend the funeral.

13.4. Assign an escort to accompany each casket that will be used.

13.5. Conducts a nondenominational interment service.

13.6. Provide full military honors. Details pertaining to military honors are contained in paragraph **8.1**

13.7. A United States burial flag will drape the group casket. It will be folded at the completion of the military funeral honors. This flag will not be presented but retained by the Air Force. United States burial flag(s) will be presented to those delineated in paragraphs **6.1** through **6.4** unless an individual burial has already been conducted. In that case, only the Primary Next of Kin (PNOK), for each fallen Airman, will be presented a flag and flag case.

13.8. Provide a specially fabricated headstone to mark the group burial site.

13.9. Provide each PADD 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. Return personal property and effects to the authorized recipient, as specified by law.

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

14.1. Memorial Service. The memorial service may be conducted at a place selected by the PADD 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 PADD's desires. If the deceased held an aeronautical rating or meets criteria outlined in paragraph **8.2**, the PADD may request a flyover.

14.1.2. At the conclusion of the service, a flag of the United States of America and a flag case is presented to those delineated in paragraphs [6.1](#) through [6.4](#)

14.2. Funeral Travel. Round trip travel will be provided at Air Force expense to attend the memorial service arranged by the PADD. Travel is authorized for those individuals described in paragraph [10](#).

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 PADD reimbursement for a memorial service to help pay for expenses not to exceed the amount allowed for a funeral with subsequent interment in a government cemetery.

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 2](#). This guide is designed to alleviate undue burden on your family members should you become a casualty. Take the time to carefully review the information and complete the attachment. Provide copies of your expressed wishes contained within this attachment to your family members. Questions concerning benefits or discussions about mortuary matters can be answered by the installation MO.

DARRELL D. JONES, Lt General, USAF
DCS, Manpower, Personnel, and Services

Attachment 1

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

References

AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, 1 March 2008

Adopted Forms

DD Form 93, *Record of Emergency Data*

DD 2064, *Certificate of Death*

DD 1300, *Report of Casualty*

AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CONUS—Continental United States

FSS—Force Support Squadron

MO—Mortuary Officer

NOK—Next of Kin

OCONUS—Outside the Continental United States

PADD—Person Authorized to Direct Disposition

PERE—Person Eligible to Receive Effects

PNOK—Primary Next of Kin

RDS—Records Disposition Schedule

RNR—Remains not Recovered

vRED—Virtual Record of Emergency Data

Terms

Next of Kin (NOK)—The decedent's family members who may include spouse (if married), children, parents, brothers and sisters.

Person Authorized to Direct Disposition (PADD)—In accordance with Federal law the PADD is the person authorized to direct disposition of the remains that was designated by the deceased member.

Primary Next-of-Kin (PNOK)—The person most closely related to the deceased individual.

Attachment 2

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 let you know my thoughts.

A1.1. At the time of my death, I prefer (Circle One):

GROUND BURIAL

CREMATION

A1.2. I feel it would be best if preparation, casketing, and transportation were arranged and handled by (Circle One):

THE AIR FORCE

MY PERSON AUTHORIZED TO DIRECT DISPOSITION (PADD)

A1.3. Casket selection if A.1. selection is ground burial (Circle One):

18 GAUGE METAL CASKET

SOLID HARDWOOD CASKET

A1.4. Urn selection if A.1. selection is cremation (Circle One):

SOLID BRONZE URN

SOLID WALNUT URN

A1.5. My cemetery preference is (Circle One):

PRIVATE CEMETERY

GOVERNMENT CEMETERY

CEMETERY NAME/LOCATION: _____

A1.6. If I chose cremation in A.1., I wish my cremated remains to be (Select One):

BURIED IN THE CEMETERY LISTED IN A5.

PLACED IN A COLUMBARIUM AT THE CEMETERY LISTED IN A5.

RETAIN MY URN AT HOME

SCATTER MY CREMATED REMAINS AT _____

A1.7. My remains should be consigned to the funeral home designated below for services prior to interment or cremation:

FUNERAL HOME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: (____) _____

A1.8. My preference for an escort would be (Circle One):

SPECIAL ESCORT

APPOINTED ESCORT

If special escort, please provide the following information from the preferred escort:

NAME/RANK (if applicable): _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: (____) _____

A1.9. Clothing to be dressed (Circle One):

SERVICE DRESS UNIFORM

FLIGHT SUIT (If authorized)

APPROPRIATE CIVILIAN ATTIRE

A.1.10. Outer Burial Container at private cemetery (Circle One): *Some cemeteries require the use of a vault

VAULT

GRAVE LINER

NONE OR NO PREFERENCE

A1.11. Type of Funeral Service(s) I desire: (More than one may be marked)

PLACE OF WORSHIP

NAME: _____

FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL LISTED A7.

GRAVESIDE AT CEMETERY LISTED A5.

OTHER: _____

NO PREFERENCE

A1.12. (Circle One) I DO/DO NOT wish to have the appropriate Military Honors at my service.

A1.13. (Circle One) I DO/DO NOT wish to have Air Force Chaplain at my service.

A1.14. (Circle One) I DO/DO NOT wish to have a flyover, if I am eligible (see paragraph 8.2)

A1.15. (Circle One) I DO/DO NOT wish to have a government furnished marker.

A1.16. My preference of Music and Readings: _____

A1.17. My preference for flowers, memorial or charitable contributions in my memory:

A1.18. Individuals I wish to be present or take part in my service:

MEMBER NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

WITNESS NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____