

# Southern Currents



---

## Notice to the Area Port of New Orleans Trade Community

---

Date: June 21, 2012

No.: 12-014

---

**SUBJECT:** Requirements for Importing and Processing Human Remains through a CBP Port of Entry.

In an effort to proactively address the expedited release of these types of shipments, CBP Headquarters is asking CBP Port Directors to take the following steps:

- Ensure that the transporting carrier's cargo staff are aware of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requirements for importation of human remains (<http://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/human-remains.html>);
- Ensure that the transporting carrier has a procedure for an alert from the foreign departure station identifying cargo shipments of human remains;
- Obtain release at the first U.S. port or arrival provided this will not delay an onward connection; if it is necessary to move the shipment under CBP in-bond procedures, the transporting carrier at the in-bond origin port alerts airline cargo staff at the destination port to obtain release from CBP at the earliest time possible; and
- Ensure that the transporting air carrier immediately notifies the CDC when the required documentation is not available.

This guidance applies to human remains (i.e., the whole body or portion of the body of a deceased human being) intended for interment (e.g. burial or placement in a tomb) or subsequent cremation after entry into the United States.

There are no requirements for importation into the United States if human remains consist entirely of the following:

- Clean, dried bones or bone fragments;
- human hair;
- teeth;
- fingernails or toenails;
- or human remains that have been cremated may be admitted into the United States without restriction, regardless of the cause of death.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) requires ashes be carried in a temporary box of wood, light plastic or cardboard because urns are too dense to allow screeners to see the contents on an X-ray machine.

Human remains intended for interment or subsequent cremation after entry into the United States must be accompanied by a death certificate stating the cause of death. If the death certificate is in a language other than English, then it should be accompanied by an English language translation. If the cause of death was a quarantinable communicable disease (i.e., cholera, diphtheria, infectious tuberculosis, plague, smallpox, yellow fever, viral hemorrhagic fevers, SARS, or pandemic influenza), the remains must meet the standards for importation found in 42 CFR Part 71.55 and may be cleared, released, and authorized for entry into the United States only under the following conditions:

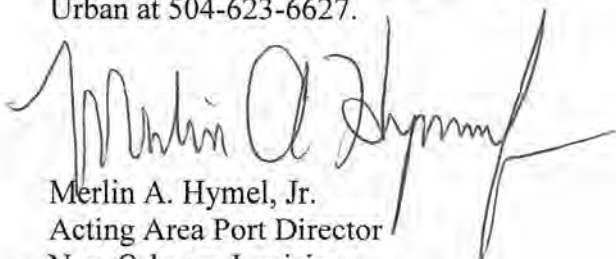
- The remains are cremated; or
- The remains are properly embalmed and placed in a hermetically sealed casket; or
- The remains are accompanied by a permit issued by the CDC Director. The CDC permit (if applicable) must accompany the human remains at all times during shipment.

Corpses, together with their coffins and accompanying flowers are exempt from duty. No formal entry is required. Coffins not imported with human remains ARE dutiable.

There may be Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) concerns regarding the accompanying flowers. CBP Agriculture Officers will make a determination of Admissibility of any accompanying flowers on site. See information on Entry of cut flowers 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 319.

If a casket bearing human remains is entered at a facility with Public Health Service Officers on site, Public Health usually provides a stamped release on the Airway Bill. CBP may then admit the casket and human remains without restriction. Where Public Health Service Officers are not on site, CBP Officers will examine the death certificate to determine the cause of death and ensure that the remains are shipped in a leak proof container. A leak proof container is one that is puncture-resistant and sealed in a manner so as to contain all contents and prevent leakage of fluids during handling, storage, transport, or shipping. CBP may immediately admit the remains unless the person died of a quarantined disease (cholera, diphtheria, infectious tuberculosis, plague, smallpox, yellow fever, viral hemorrhagic fevers, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and influenza caused by novel or reemergent influenza viruses that are causing or have the potential to cause a pandemic). If there is no evidence that the remains are embalmed and the casket, containing this category of remains, is hermetically sealed, CBP will hold the casket and contact the appropriate quarantine station for instructions. A hermetically sealed container is one that is airtight and secured against the escape of microorganisms.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Supervisory CBP Officer Audrey Urban at 504-623-6627.



Merlin A. Hymel, Jr.  
Acting Area Port Director  
New Orleans, Louisiana