

# Death of a U.S. Citizen in France

**(This is a general overview provided by the US Embassy, is subject to change & may not be applicable in every case.)**

- The Consular Section of the US Embassy is notified by family or by French authorities. If we are notified by family, we immediately express condolences and explain next steps. If we are notified by French authorities or others, we must locate the deceased's next of kin so that we can notify them as quickly as possible.
- The Consular Section follows the verbal notification with an email to again express condolences, explain that we issue a Consular Report of Death Abroad (CRODA), and offer guidance on next steps in the administrative process. If the next of kin is not present with the deceased, we explain that we can take temporary possession of the deceased's personal effects. The family may also work with the funeral home to collect and send the personal effects of the deceased.
- If a cause of death has not been determined, we explain that French medical authorities have not yet stated the cause of death and we advise if an autopsy will be performed (per information provided by French authorities. We cannot intervene nor determine if an autopsy is needed, nor can we demand that the authorities waive the autopsy if the family does not want it to be performed).
- French law requires the expeditious disposition of remains (cremation or burial). We provide the next of kin (or their designee) with the list of English-speaking funeral homes from our website and advise them to select one (either on our list or one they found on their own) as soon as possible, because the funeral home will be the primary point of contact between the family and French authorities. If there is an open investigation to determine cause of death, the Préfet will have to authorize the release of remains to the funeral home in order to proceed with funeral arrangements. The funeral home cannot proceed without this authorization.
- We provide an estimate of costs for burial in France, cremation in France, the preparation and return of remains to the United States via air shipment, and the cost for cremation and shipment of ashes in the United States. Exact costs will be determined in consultation with the funeral home.
- If the family wish the remains to be shipped to the United States, we advise that they work with a U.S. funeral home as well.
- We point out that preparation and air shipment are carried out in accordance with French law, which may be different from what is done in the U.S.

- We encourage family to check if the deceased had travel insurance or financed their travel with a credit card that may include travel insurance, which could defray some of the costs.
- There are several documents that we ask the next of kin to provide:
  - A French death certificate issued by the city hall (full copy “copie intégrale”). (If the family is not present, the funeral home will request it and share it with us)
  - Address of the deceased in the U.S.
  - Address of the deceased in France
  - The most recent U.S. passport (if still valid), which will be canceled and returned to the family. (French authorities will give the passport to us if they were involved with the discovery of the body)
  - A doctor’s letter stating that the cause of death was natural (“certificat de mort naturelle”) or a "certificat de décès (volet bleu)".
  - Decision on disposition of remains (burial, cremation, shipment to the U.S.)
  - Name, relationship, mailing and email addresses of the custodian of personal effects.
  - Name, relationship, mailing and email addresses of the recipients of the Report of Death.
- We provide a link to a website that explains how to report a death to proper authorities in the U.S.: [usa.gov](https://www.usa.gov)