



**U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs
Disposition of Remains Report**

December 21, 2017

Part I. Name of Country:

Tonga

Part II. U.S. Embassy Information

U.S. Embassy Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, Tuvalu

158 Princes Road, Suva Fiji

Phone: +679-331-4466

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[State Department Country Specific Information](#)

[Register With the U.S. Embassy](#)

Part III. Profile of Religions of the Host Country and Religious Services available to visitors.

[Country Profile](#)

Religious Activities For Visitors: Christian and Baha'i

Part IV. Funeral Directors, Mortician and Related Services Available in the Host Country:

DISCLAIMER: The U.S. Embassy in Suva, Fiji assumes no responsibility or liability for the professional ability or reputation of, or the quality of services provided by, the following persons or firms. Names are listed alphabetically, and the order in which they appear has no other significance. Professional credentials and areas of expertise are provided directly by the funeral directors, morticians and other service providers.

Funeral Home: Nuku'alofa Mortuary Co. Ltd – Dr. Makameone Taumoepeau : Phone: 676-771-6600, 676-771-6601, 771-4772 / 676-24 814

Ministry of Lands and Survey (for cemetery plot): Lands Management Section: 676-23611

Air Pacific Air Cargo: Mr. Lani Hiliau, Air Cargo Supervisor Phone: 676-23423

Vaiola Hospital: Dr. Siale 'Akau'ola, Phone: 676-23 200

Part V. Profile of services available regarding preparation and shipment of remains:

What Happens First: Tongan law (Public Health Act, section 159) requires that internment be made within 24 hours from time of death, subject to the Inquest Act and directions by the

Minister for Health. However, this is not enforced or strictly adhered to, as interment usually takes place within 3-7 days.

Initial Death Certificate (Doctor's Certificate): Regardless of where the death occurs, a doctor needs to certify the death. If the death occurs in a remote area with no doctor, then the district nurse and town officer will sign a death notification for a death certificate to be issued later at a base hospital by an authorised senior doctor. This certification will be required for burial, embalmment or shipment to take place.

If the death occurs in a hospital, the attending physician will provide the certification. An autopsy is only performed if the death is suspected of being a result of foul play. An autopsy normally takes just one day, but the completion of the autopsy report will take one week. If further laboratory tests/analyses are needed to be done overseas, the autopsy report will not be completed until the results of these tests are received back in Tonga.

Maximum Period Before Burial: Tongan law dictates that burial takes place within 24 hours, but this is not enforced. Relatives usually keep the remains in the funeral home or morgue for a few days before burial.

Embalming: Embalming facilities exist in Tonga. There are no written rules or Tongan law that mention embalming. However, according to Department of Health authorities, funeral directors are aware that they are not allowed to embalm a body that has not been certified dead by a doctor. Health authorities are also aware that embalming should not take place within four hours of death.

Cremation: There are no cremation facilities in Tonga.

Caskets and Containers: The funeral home has caskets that are used for shipment of remains overseas. The casket is put in a tray and then covered with cardboard before shipment.

Exportation of Remains: The documents that are required for shipment of remains are:

1. Embalmment of the remains
2. Enclosure of the remains in casket as described above
3. Mortician's Certificate of embalming
4. Tongan Death certificate
5. The deceased's passport (or copy) if a citizen of the United States

Exhumation and Shipment: Although exhumation is rarely done, Tongan authorities may permit disinterment upon certain conditions. All applications for disinterment may be made to the Prime Minister who will decide the terms under which a permit may be given. Once a permit is granted, Tongan law states that the applicant is expected to be responsible for the transportation and/or reinterment of the remains.

Cultural issues related to funeral, mourning and memorial customs: None.

Approximate Costs:

- Interment of remains in local cemetery: There is a cemetery in Nuku'alofa with plots reserved for foreigners who may have to be buried in Tonga. Past practice has seen the plots free of charge but costs associated with casket preparations and transportation of the remains to the cemetery range \$300 – 500.
- Preparation and air shipment to the U.S. (California): \$2,500 (Embalment, casket, shipment)
- Preparation and air shipment to the U.S. (New York): \$3,000 (Embalment, casket, shipment)