

International Transport of Human Remains

In order to alleviate the concerns about the risk of infection posed by dead bodies resulting from a disaster, we provide the following information.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has issued guidance on handling bodies after disasters and these can be found on their web site at www.who.int.

The WHO guidelines are taken from a publication written by the Pan American Health Organization and endorsed by WHO. The first principle states: The body of a person killed as a result of a disaster does not pose a risk of infection.

The IATA Guidelines on Handling of Human Remains can be found in the IATA Airport Handling Manual at page 149: AHM 333 Handling of Human Remains, or in the introduction of the IATA TACT (The Air Cargo Tariff). Compliance with these guidelines, which are enshrined into the rules of most countries, makes it very unlikely that body fluid leakage would occur. However, should a body fluid leakage occur while transporting dead bodies, the usual accepted guidelines endorsed by WHO for dealing with spilled body fluids should be followed:

- Wear disposable gloves and, if available, a plastic apron
- If the spillage has occurred on an aircraft, only use cleaning materials suitable for aircraft use.
- Do not try to clean the body fluids by hosing with water or air.
- Use material that will adsorb the body fluids and scrape the material into a biohazard bag.
- Wash the area with water/disinfectant after removal of the adsorbent material.
- Dispose of gloves and apron in a biohazard bag.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water afterwards.

If you have any further questions, contact your airline Medical Department or your national public health agency.

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