

UNCLASSIFIED
MEMORANDUM

TO: Department of State (CA/OCS/ACS/EAP)
FROM: US Embassy Seoul, Korea
TAGS: CASC
SUBJECT: DEATH: Disposition of Remains Report
REF: [7 FAM 260](#)

The following information is submitted in accordance with the referenced requirements. Various area mortuaries were surveyed in order to compile this data. The laws cited are from the National Law of the Republic of Korea, "Law Regarding Funerals and Others" (Korean language only <http://www.law.go.kr/lsInfoP.do?lsiSeq=142619&efYd=20140807#AJAX>).

Part I. Republic of Korea

Part II. U.S. Embassy Seoul

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[State Department Country Specific Information](#)
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Part III. Profile of Religions and Religious Services

Country Profile: Approximately 20 percent of Koreans practice Christianity; more than two thirds of Christians are Protestant, and less than 8 percent are Roman Catholic. Buddhism, the second most common religion, is practiced by approximately 16 percent of Koreans. Koreans also practice Islam, Shamanism (traditional spirit worship), and Chondogyo ("Heavenly Way"). However, more than 50 percent of Republic of Korea (ROK) citizens are not religiously affiliated (as of the 2015 national census).

There is no state religion, and freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. Religious instruction is not permitted in public schools but is allowed in private schools. The Temples Preservation Law protects cultural properties including Buddhist temples, and provides some subsidies for their preservation. Prominent societal leaders regularly promote religious freedom. Religious leaders regularly meet privately and under government auspices to promote mutual understanding and tolerance. Both Buddha's Birthday and Christmas are celebrated as national holidays.

Religious Activities for Visitors: English-language services for members of many Christian denominations are available in most major cities. Please refer to the Korea for Expats website <http://www.korea4expats.com/article-protestant-churches-seoul.html> for a list of English-language services. Buddhist temples are found throughout the country, and there are mosques in many larger cities.

Part IV. Funeral Directors, Mortician and Related Services Available

DISCLAIMER: The U.S. Embassy, Seoul, Korea, 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.

***Embalming Korea**

Address: #605, 138-1 Jongno, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea
Tel: 82-2-2263-5559 / For English assistance: 82-10-2966-3889
Mobile: 82-10-2317-5863
Fax: 82-2-2263-5579
E-mail: embalmingkorea@gmail.com
Website: www.embalmingkorea.co.kr / www.embalmingkorea.com
Name: Mr. Kyu Seong Hwang
Services provided: Embalming/ cremation/ shipment can be arranged
Languages spoken: English/ Korean

***International Funeral Service**

Address: Daeung Bldg., 59 Nae-dong, Ojeong-gu, Bucheon, Gyeonggi-do, Korea
Tel: 82-10-3668-3439
Fax: 82-32-656-3439
E-mail: ikkimregl@korea.com
Website: internationalfs.co.kr
President: Mr. Ill Kwon KIM (*Licensed embalmer/funeral director both in Korea and U.S.A*)
Services provided: Embalming/cremation/shipment can be arranged
Languages spoken: English/Korean

***International Mortuary Service**

Address: 337-22 Namgajwa-dong, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul, Korea
Tel: 82-2-3411-4404/ 82-10-9085-1671, 82-10-3415-4404
Fax: 82-2-308-3745
E-mail: jfk4404@naver.com
Name: Cho, Tae Hyung
Services provided: Embalming/cremation/shipment can be arranged
Languages spoken: English/Korean

***L & J Funeral Care**

Address: 35-8, Seoae-ro 5 gil, Jung-gu, Seoul, Korea

Tel: 82-10-4064-0599

Fax: 82-50-4082-0599

E-mail: brian0925@empal.com

President: Brian Jongwoo Lee (*Licensed embalmer/funeral director both in Korea and U.S.A*)

Services provided: Embalming/cremation/memorial services/ shipment can be arranged

Languages spoken: English/Korean, Russian translator available

***KoreanFuneral.com**

Address: 25-20 Macheon-dong, Songpa-gu, Seoul, Korea

Tel: 82-2-430-4444/ 82-10-7286-6798

Fax: 82-2-448-9031

E-mail: hanwookr@hanmail.net

Website: koreanfuneral.co.kr

President: Mr. Han Woo Lee/ operating with a contract embalmer

Services provided: Embalming/cremation/shipment can be arranged

Languages spoken: Korean only

***Global Mortuary Science Co.**

Address: Koryo Bldg., Rm.513, #101-41 Galwol-dong, Yongsan-gu, Seoul, Korea

Tel: 82-2-752-4444/82-17-221-6329

Fax: 82-2-2001-9933

E-mail: globalpyd@yahoo.co.kr

President: Mr. Yong Doo Park

Services provided: Embalming/cremation/shipment can be arranged

Languages spoken: English/Korean

***Korea Funeral Association(사단법인 한국장례협회)**

Address: 4F, Daesung Bldg, 391, Cheongpa-ro, Yongsan-gu, Seoul, Korea

Tel: 82-2-3472-4444

Fax: 82-2-3472-4464

E-mail: ftamaster@naver.com

President: Mr. Il Do Park

Services provided: Funeral Services in Korea

Languages spoken: Korean

Part V. Profile of services available for the preparation and shipment of remains

Disposition of Remains (general): Morgues are generally located in hospitals and have sufficient refrigeration capacity. Facilities are available throughout ROK, and mortuary personnel meet a high level

of professional standards. Autopsies are not required except when requested in the course of law enforcement or medical investigations. Family members may also request autopsies.

The ROK encourages cremation over burial and provides state funding to local governments for the construction of public crematoriums. Despite traditional beliefs that ancestors should be respected through burial and gravesite visits, the cremation rate exceeded 90.2 percent in 2021. Local authorities must consent before cremation or burial of remains occurs. Burial must be reported to local authorities with jurisdiction of the grave plot within 30 days. All burials must be in legally registered cemeteries. Undertakers must follow Ministry of Health and Welfare procedures to sanitize and chemically treat deceased bodies before burial.

Period before Burial of Remains: By law, at least 24 hours must pass after the official time of death before the deceased's body can be buried or cremated. There is an exception for stillborn fetuses (under 7 months) and others as provided by presidential decree. Korean funerals usually last three days and remains are generally disposed of on the second or third day after death.

Embalming: Embalming is rarely practiced in Korea, and there are no established standards or licensing procedures. However, there are licensed morticians who follow available U. S. commercial embalming regulations, and some are included in the list of morticians in Part IV.

Cremation: Cremation is the most prevalent practice for disposal of remains in Korea. According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare, as of May 2021, there are 60 crematoria in ROK, and the government plans to build more facilities to meet increasing demand. Local undertakers generally handle arrangements related to cremation. Cremation of human remains must be reported to local ward or city office having jurisdiction for the crematorium facility. Foreign nationals must obtain a non-objection to cremation letter from their embassy; deceased who are long-term residents in possession of a ROK Alien Registration Card are exempt from this requirement. When cremated remains are buried, the urn must be biodegradable so that nearby commercial and/or residential areas are unaffected.

Caskets and Containers: Caskets containing a body or containers with human ashes are treated as ordinary freight. Existing Korean laws do not regulate caskets or containers for remains.

Exportation of human remains: The ROK has no laws (local or national) governing the exportation of human remains. Embalmed remains should be enclosed in an airtight wooden or metal casket complying with International Air Transport Association standards. Although not specified by law, funeral directors and morticians request the following documents for submission to the Korea Customs Service (KCS) to facilitate exportation of remains.

- Consular Report of Death Abroad
- Death certificate from local government authority
- Mortician's embalming certificate
- Copy of the deceased's passport

Exportation of Human Cremations/Ashes: Cremated remains are normally reported to KCS through a simpler export declaration procedure. Requested documents for air freight or hand carry are:

- Certificate of cremation
- Consular Report of Death Abroad
- Death certificate from local government authority

- Consular mortuary certificate
- Affidavit from local funeral director concerning contents of urn
- Copy of the deceased's passport

Shipping: In Korea, it is considered very safe to transport human remains between cities using public transportation. When death occurs outside of a large metropolitan area, the remains may be transferred for preparation. Shipping by private vehicle is the most common method for transporting remains within Korea. Daily flights to/from major U.S. cities are available on at least ten international carriers.

Licensing: Municipal or provincial governments issue licenses to qualified Embalmers and Funeral Directors who have completed a course of mortuary science at an approved institution. Programs for funeral directors and/or embalmers do not necessarily include a written test. Qualifications, course programs, licensing requirements and license issuance/reinstatement for funeral directors and embalmers are regulated by Ministry of Health and Welfare.

Costs: The following costs are subject to change and will vary according to locations, weight of the deceased, and other circumstances. Cost in dollars was calculated using the exchange rate of May 4, 2021: \$1.00 = 1,122 KRW (local currency). – Subject to change * Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, prices have largely increased.

Service	Korean Won	US Dollars
Local interment: including resting fee, local transportation, casket, permanent grave plot, and gravestone.	15,000,000 to 25,000,000	13,369 to 22,282
Local interment of cremated remains: including resting fee, local transportation, urn, and permanent grave plot.	4,500,000	4,011
Embalming: including resting fee, local transportation, casket, and documentation.	4,500,000	4,011
Transportation of casket by air: East coast of United States (varies by destination) West coast of United States (varies by destination)	8,000,000 7,800,000	7,130 6,952
Cremation: including cremation, documentation, coffin, local transportation, and urn.	3,500,000	3,119
Transportation of cremated remains by air: United States (slight variation by destination)	1,200,000	1,070

Exhumation: Exhumation is only permitted with authorization from the local authorities having jurisdiction over the place of disinterment. A licensed practitioner or an official from the local district office is required to be present at the time of exhumation, but the local authority may waive the requirement in special circumstances.

Local Customs Regarding Funerals, Disposition of Remains, Mourning, and Memorial Services: Funerals usually last three days, during which family and friends visit and pay their respects. After the death is announced, the family accepts visitors for funeral services, and visitors often bring condolence money to contribute to the family. Funerals are generally held in hospital funeral areas, or independently run funeral homes. To obtain more information about the funeral services in Korea, contact the Korea Funeral Association (contact information in part IV). Cremation is now the most common way of disposing of remains. It is accepted by a variety of religions and is much less expensive than burial. In urban areas, cremated remains are generally housed in columbarium (containment vault for urns) with niches for display and memorials to the deceased.

The modern funeral is quite different from traditional or non-Christian services. Traditional funerals reflect Confucian and Buddhist principals, and involve a myriad of memorial services. These might include daily services for the first seven days, a number of services within the first 49 days, and/or services marking the seventh, forty-ninth, and hundredth days after death. Koreans traditionally buried loved ones in mounds on mountains, and some continue this practice. Cremated remains may also be buried in a similar way.

Even after the initial funeral services are over, many Koreans perform periodic memorial rites. Tradition calls for visits to the burial place or columbarium on each anniversary of the deceased's death and on holidays including lunar New Year and Chuseok (Korean Thanksgiving). Most believe that burial grounds must be cleaned and well maintained to ensure the ancestor's spirits are kept happy.