



British Embassy Reykjavik

Information on what to do in the event of the death of a British national in Iceland, including the coroner and post mortem processes.

For more details on deaths overseas, please see the following FCO publications

[Death overseas](#)
[Guide for bereaved families](#)

While care has been taken in compiling these notes, no legal liability for their contents is accepted by the British Embassy.

Death

The death of a relative or a friend can be a traumatic experience. When the death occurs overseas, family and friends in the UK can feel additional distress as they are unfamiliar with foreign procedures and perhaps are unable to communicate in the language of the country where the death occurred. Consular Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and consular officials in Iceland are ready to help in any way they can. You may be uncertain about what to do next or who to contact for advice. These notes are designed to help you through the practical arrangements you will need to make. You should be aware that Icelandic procedures may differ slightly to those in the United Kingdom and that, while we understand your need for arrangements to be made quickly, this may not always be possible.

Mortuaries

All the major hospitals in Iceland have mortuaries. Útfararstofa Kirkjugarðanna in Fossvogur, Reykjavík is the single biggest mortuary. They also have two crematoriums. The Icelandic Directorate of Health contingency plan allows for cooler containers at various locations around the country. All funeral parlours around the country and in the capital have storage facilities for cadavers.

Repatriation and burial

A relative or a formally appointed representative must instruct a funeral director in Iceland or the UK for a body to be repatriated to the UK or buried or cremated in Iceland. If the deceased was insured you should contact the insurance company so that they can make the necessary arrangements. If there is no insurance cover, funds for repatriation or burial will need to be met by the family. Neither the British Embassy or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London have budgets to meet these costs.

Certificate

A medical certificate certifying the death is issued by a local doctor. All deaths will be registered by the National Registry. A certified copy is usually issued immediately if all necessary details are available. The certificate costs 1900 ISK and states the date of death, place of death and marriage status at the time of death. Icelandic death certificates do not show the cause of death. The death will remain on file in Iceland via hospital archives or the Department of Health.

Although not obligatory, it is possible to register in the UK the death of a British national who has died in Iceland. This service carries a statutory fee. However, an Icelandic death certificate is internationally recognised and valid in the UK.

Coroner

When a body is repatriated to England or Wales from Iceland, the police will only hold an inquest if the death was violent or unnatural or if the death was sudden and the cause unknown. A UK coroner may order a post mortem as part of the inquest (even if a post mortem has already been carried out in Iceland). The UK coroner does not have access to the Icelandic judicial file. The British coroner may however request a copy of the Icelandic police and post mortem reports through Consular Directorate. However these reports will only be provided once the judicial process (if any) has been completed. In some cases this can take several months.

Coroners in Northern Ireland are not obliged to hold an inquest into the cause of death, but next of kin can apply for a judicial review if an inquest has been decided against.

Under the CREMATION (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 1935 AND 1952, a permit for cremation must be obtained from the Scottish Executive in Edinburgh. Coroners do not exist in Scotland and there are no special formalities for a burial there.

Police and judicial enquiries

Inquiries are not held when the doctor who certifies a death is satisfied that no suspicious circumstances exist and the death was due to natural causes. However, an inquiry is usually held when the death occurs in a public place, eg in the street or at a hotel, or when there is suspicion surrounding the cause of death.

The Icelandic police are involved at this stage and will hold an initial inquiry. A medical expert must inspect the body and decide whether or not to issue the medical certificate. If in doubt, he or she will not issue the certificate and a post mortem and further police inquiries will be undertaken. If a post mortem or further forensic tests are ordered this may delay the issue of the burial permit. If the post mortem indicates foul play, eg. murder, then the police will conduct a full investigation and can summon witnesses and commission further investigations. The medical expert aims to reach conclusions about the cause and circumstances of the death, and if he concludes that there has been foul play the police may charge one or more persons with criminal offences. This inquiry can take many months to complete.

Legal advice and release of information

Inquiries into deaths in Iceland are not public. In order to have access to the investigation and obtain information from the police file, interested parties must apply through a lawyer to the police. A list of English speaking lawyers in Iceland is available on this [website](#). Consular staff do not have access to a judicial inquiry and cannot give legal advice.

Even in the most routine cases, such as death from natural causes in ordinary circumstances, there is no routine way of obtaining official confirmation of the medical cause of death. The doctor who certifies the death will not usually provide a medical certificate which states anything other than that he has medically certified the death.

Post mortems

A post mortem will be carried out at a hospital. Only medical staff and the police in charge of the investigation can attend.

Legal aid

British nationals who have court cases in Iceland, and are unable to fund the services of a lawyer privately, are entitled to a nominated local lawyer. This legal aid can be either full or partial, depending mainly on the applicant's income and family circumstances.

Useful addresses

Organisation	Address	Telephone	Website
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Consular Directorate	King Charles St, City of Westminster, London SW1A 2AH	+44(0) 20 7008 1500	www.gov.uk
British Embassy Reykjavik	Laufásvegur 31, PO Box 460, 121 Reykjavík, Iceland	+354 550 5100	www.gov.uk/government/world/iceland
Incorporated Law Society of Northern Ireland	Bedford House, 16-22 Bedford Street, Belfast BT2 7FL	+44 (0)1232 246441	www.lawsoc-ni.org
Scottish Executive, Public Health Policy	St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH11 3XD	+44 (0)131 244 2501	www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk
Legal Services Commission	85 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8TX	+44 (0)20 7759 0000131	www.justice.gov.uk/legal-aid
Scottish Legal Aid Central Committee	44 Drumsheigh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7SW	+44 (0)131 226 7061	www.slab.org.uk
Victim Support	Cranmer House, 39 Brixton Road, London SW9 6DZ44	+44 (0)845 3030 900	www.victimsupport.org

International funeral directors

Every care has been taken compiling this list. However, neither Her Majesty's Government nor the British Embassy in Reykjavik can act as guarantor of the competence or probity of any particular company, nor can they be held responsible in any way for consequences arising from advice accepted or action initiated.

All the below companies can take calls in English.

Companies based in the United Kingdom:

Funeral Director	Address	Telephone/fax	E-mail/Website
Co-Operative Funeral care international	50 Whitta Road, Manor Park, London, E12 5DA	+44(0) 208 788 5303	www.co-operative.coop/funeralcare
Albin International Repatriation	83 Westbourne Grove, London, W2 4UL	+44(0) 20 7313 6920	info@albininternational.com www.albininternational.com
Haven Repatriation Services	13 The Broadway, Gunnersbury Lane, London, W3 8HR	+44(0) 20 8993 8767	info@havenfunerals.com www.havenfunerals.com
Rowland Brothers International	299-305 Whitehorse Rd, Croydon, CR0 2HR	+44(0) 20 8684 2324, 020 8684 1667	info@rowlandbrothersinternational.co.uk www.rowlandbrothersinternational.co.uk
National Association Of Funeral Directors	618 Warwick Road, Solihull, B91 1AAR	+44(0) 121 711 1343, +44(0)121 711 1351	info@nafd.org.uk www.nafd.org.uk

Hospital Contacts in Iceland:

Útfararstofa Kirkjugarðanna, Vesturhlíð 2, 105 Reykjavík, Iceland Tel: +354-551-1266 / 821-5141 www.utfor.is	
NATIONAL HOSPITAL, Fossvogur, 105 Reykjavik	543-1000
Hringbraut, 101 Reykjavik	543-1000
KEFLAVIK HOSPITAL, Skolavegur 6, 230 Reykjanesbaer	422-0500
AKUREYRI HOSPITAL, Eyrarlandsvegi, 600 Akureyri	463-0100
SELFOSS HOSPITAL, Arvegi, 800 Selfoss	480-5100
EGILSSTADIR HOSPITAL, Lagaras 17-19, 700 Egilsstadir	470-3000
AKRANES HOSPITAL, Merkigerdi 9, 300 Akranes	432-1000