

Important information

In the case of Medical Emergency or Accidental Death of a foreigner in Mexico

Prepared by: Ginny Vassal, Canadian, in La Manzanilla February 2017 based on my experience of helping the non-spanish speaking family of a friend through each step of the process following that friend's drowning at Tenacatita in February 2017. May you never need this information, but if you do, I hope it helps.

* means recommended by Larry Chamberlain, who has been very supportive of this process being documented and shared. I do not have personal experience with these services.

Local Contact information: MEXICO

NAME	TELEPHONE	OTHER INFO
Ambulance – Melaque / Cihuatlan, operated by Red Cross	315-355-2300	We had the military at Tenacatita call the ambulance, we believe this is the number they called.
911 *	911	We've been told this may work
Fire and Civil Protection *	315-355-6375	
Regional Health Centre, Cihuatlan, everyone refers to as "hospital", where ambulances go to	315-355-2171	Address: 12 Lopez Mateo; turn left at Kiosko {lights, I believe 2 nd lights on way into town}. Up about 4 blocks on left.
Medical Dr in Melque: Dr Rosa Vivas Alcaraz *	315-109-7777	Recommended *
Medical Dr in Melque: Dr Maria Herlinda Rubio *	315-355-5412	Recommended *
Private Medical Clinic in Manzanillo: Centro Medico Echauri *	314-334-1666 314-334-0444	Recommended *
Delgado office – La Manzanilla	351-5048	Where death certificate of foreigner staying in La Manzanilla is prepared.

Funeral Home in Melaque – Funerales San Jose {CONSEP}	Roy cell – 315-109-3887. Roy speaks reasonable English and learned much about this process with us. Office: 315-109-2326	15 Venito Juarrez, near jardin. This is who the above hospital referred us to; he was willing to come to the hospital on a Sunday night to meet with us and take possession of the body.
Funeral Home in Cihuatlan – Funerales San Jose {CONSEP}	See above Roy / office.	68 Acquils Cerdan, in front of Farmacia Guadajajara

Death of a Canadian: Canadian Consulate contacts and information:

STRONGLY RECOMMEND YOU ESTABLISH A CASE FILE NUMBER WITH THE Canadian Consulate, I found them to be very helpful.

ESTABLISH A CASE FILE NUMBER WITH THE Canadian Consulate Emergency line – 24 hours – staffed In Canada	1-613-996-8885 { There also is a 1-800 number which works in Canada, it’s supposed to work outside of Canada, did not try it} 1-800-387-3124. The 613 number apparently accepts collect calls, however I bought a phone plan and simply direct dialed.	Use this number to create a file. A file or case number will not be created until the consular staff member speaks with the attending physician. This is critical should family need to be advised in Canada and family contact info not be available.
Puerto Vallarta office, Canadian Consulate	52-322-293-0098. Back-up number 322-293-0099 Email pvrta@international.gc.ca	Small office, 2 staff only, may not answer phone as they are busy. Staff are Adriana Brombilia {We dealt with, very helpful}, and Adam Charlebois.
Mexico case manager in Ottawa	Contact through the above numbers in Canada, currently Nahima in this position.	This is the link for the next of kin or spouse located in Canada. They may provide forms; we found the forms they provided were not used here.

- Case numbers for the La Manzanilla area should be xx- PVRTA – xxxxxxx. PVRTA means Puerto Vallarta. Should the emergency telephone operator assign a GJARA {Guadalajara} code, advise we are in the PVRTA area of responsibility

Death of an American: Consulate contacts and information* :

Puerto Vallarta *	322-222-0069	
Guadalajara *	01-33-3268-2100	
Mexico City *	55-5080-2000	

PROCESS: Step by step in this situation:

1. After our friend was pronounced dead at the hospital, the hospital required his ID to release his body to the funeral home. Passport is preferred but if passport cannot be located, driver's license will be accepted. There is some urgency with this as the hospital has no refrigeration, and it needs to be the attending doctor(s) who prepare the forms.
2. The hospital recommends a funeral home to take the remains. Similarly as the funeral home had no refrigeration, they needed direction on the remains within 24 hours. The funeral home requested a 5,000 peso deposit.
3. A senior level of investigatory police took the body and all of the paperwork away during the night for an autopsy in El Grullo, near Autlan. They have the authority to do this without the permission of the family; this is the norm in the case of an accidental death of a foreigner.
4. The process was then at a standstill until the next of kin arrived in Mexico.
5. Following the completion of the autopsy and the arrival of the family / next of kin in Mexico, paperwork was required:
 - a. Declaration at the Ministerio Publico by the next of kin, jointly and separately by me (as I witnessed the accident and was part of the following life-saving efforts). The lengthy forms had to be made understandable to the next of kin in English before her signature could be accepted. Most forms are manually prepared, and spelling errors, especially re: the name of the deceased, can significantly slow the process.
 - b. Death certificate, which is signed by the next of kin, then photocopied onto the needed forms. This is required for the body to be released from El Grullo for cremation.
 - c. The above process was time consuming and problematic due to jurisdictions– even though we had confirmed several times where the paperwork could be found for each step, the paperwork had been moved from Cihautlan to La Huerta. And the death certificate, which was to be done in Cihuatlan, was finally done at the Delegado office in La Manzanilla, it alone took 4-5 hours to complete.
6. Consulate provides facilitation letter to allow remains to be carried home in suitcase.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW

- **It is critical** to have the original birth certificate and (if next of kin is husband or wife) original marriage license of the deceased, as well as the passport here in Mexico for the authorities to witness to complete the necessary forms (and there are several!).
- Next of kin must give direction on arrangements and claim remains; common-law marriage is not recognized in Mexico, only legally married spouses are considered next of kin.

- It is easiest and less costly if next of kin comes to Mexico to claim remains and complete final paperwork.
- Next of kin may choose NOT to notify the bank immediately as certain institutions freeze assets.
- Be patient; every step in Mexico will take longer than you anticipate; there will be errors to be fixed and issues to be dealt with. Carry your telephone at all times.
- If you speak no Spanish, Mike Barbe *, who runs the fishing shop by Lora Loka's in La Manzanilla offers his translation assistance, fees in US\$. Contact telephone numbers: home 351-5303, cell 315-108-9456 *.

PRICES

- There was no charge for the ambulance, hospital services, nor autopsy.
- The funeral home prices were all inclusive, ie inclusive of cremation, urn, cost of death certificates, transportation of next of kin to all the locations necessary to do paperwork, and transportation of ashes to next of kin in La Manzanilla. The Funeral home prices quoted:
 - o 5,500 pesos for body preservation (embalming) if family so chose
 - o 22,200 pesos for cremation, retrieval from El Grullo and cremation in Autlan, above transportation services, and 10 official death certificates.
 - o Widow understood she could pay by VISA, found funeral home needed cash.
- The La Manzanilla delegado charged 100 pesos per death certificate and a 150 peso processing fee, covered in the above funeral home fee.
- When advised any other fees would be charged, I contacted the Canadian Consulate (PV), they clarified the situation and the mistaken or unauthorized charges were reversed.

Special thanks to a man and wife who were instrumental in the lifesaving efforts at the scene of the accident and to the hospital, and gave extraordinary care.