

## WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEBODY DIES IN ANDORRA

### FIRST STEPS:

1. If the death occurs at home:
  - a. Call the regular doctor – they can then come round, confirm the death and prepare the certificate of confirmation (unless they decide an autopsy is needed)
  - b. If outside regular surgery hours – dial 116 (if necessary ask for somebody who speaks English) – tell them a death has occurred – they will send a doctor who can confirm the death and prepare the certificate of confirmation (unless they decide an autopsy is needed)
  - c. Also call a funeral company directly (see list below) or if outside regular business hours call 831236 or 807180 for 24 hour “on duty” funeral company service.
  - d. Find the deceased’s residencia and passport for doctor and funeral company to take correct details.
  - e. Give the funeral company the certificate of confirmation of death; the funeral company will take the body to the mortuary at the hospital and then be prepared to think about funeral arrangements
  
2. If the death occurs at the hospital:
  - a. A certificate of confirmation of death is issued (by the duty doctor)
  - b. The “on duty” funeral company will take the body to the hospital mortuary; the use of a funeral company for this service does not imply that this funeral company has to be used for any further services.
  - c. The funeral company will need to see the deceased’s passport and residencia to take correct details and will also take the certificate of confirmation of death

Note – it is important that the correct details are taken – be aware that women who are or have been married will generally be known to the hospital by their maiden names – which may cause initial confusion compared to passport details.

In order to carry out the “official” processes they provide, the funeral company will need the passport and residencia of the deceased.

The funeral company will also require a set of suitable clothes for the deceased. Note that it is normal for the body to be displayed in a glass topped casket at the mortuary and for members of the family to be in attendance while friends and neighbours come to pay their last respects. This is a local custom that is not obligatory – but arrangements will be made for this unless they are specifically stopped.

## ARRANGING A FUNERAL:

It is customary in Andorra for funerals to take place within 48 hours of death – but this is not necessary or required. Equally, almost all residents in Andorra are Catholics (even if not practicing ones) – but various different types of funerals and burials are possible. So – please take a little time to consider what the deceased would have liked to have happen and do not be rushed.

The funeral companies have experience of dealing with foreigners and the English Speaking Church has experience of helping the bereaved make appropriate decisions (if for a believer then through the church wardens and for others through experienced members of the chaplaincy council). The church wardens are Valerie Rymarenko (351 543 or [patchwork@andorra.ad](mailto:patchwork@andorra.ad)) and Michael Derham (363 707 or [bellavista@andorra.ad](mailto:bellavista@andorra.ad))

It is recommended that unless a local catholic funeral service (in Catalan or Spanish – the languages spoken by the local parish priests), followed by burial or cremation locally, is the appropriate choice, contact be made via one of the church wardens to find the most suitable arrangements.

Note that cremation is now common in Andorra – and may be a suitable alternative to local burial in a “niche” which is generally only reserved for a limited number of years (and then the remains are removed) as only Andorrans and certain long term residents may purchase a niche (nínxol).

The following are “normal” arrangements that have been made on various occasions for members of the English Speaking resident community:

1. Church funeral service in English taken by a visiting Anglican chaplain – this type of service needs be arranged through the church wardens (see above); the service itself may be held in the hospital chapel or a local parish church.
2. Church funeral service mainly in English but with Spanish (or Catalan) spoken by the local parish priest – this type of service is essentially non denominational and can include a variety of hymns, music, readings, etc as required); members of the chaplaincy council have considerable experience of helping arrange these services; the service itself may be held in the hospital chapel or a local parish church.
3. Non religious funeral ceremony at a local hotel; certain members of the chaplaincy council have experience of helping arrange these ceremonies.
4. Memorial services in English conducted by a visiting Anglican chaplain – this type of service needs be arranged through the church wardens (see above) and would normally be held in a local parish church.

Following the funeral service it is customary for the family to accompany the body to the cemetery for burial (in a “niche” rather than a grave – the opening and sealing of the niche is not often an uplifting experience) or to the crematorium for cremation (as there is

no ceremony here this again is not an uplifting experience – it is a very “mechanical” procedure as cremation takes place). Again, it is customary but the funeral company can do this without the presence of the family.

Receptions are commonly arranged after the funeral at local hotels. These can be simple or elaborate. It is possible to combine a non religious funeral ceremony and reception at the same location.

More details of contacts are given below with additional information. For further advice contact one of the Helpline volunteers directly – they can help you find the right person to talk with.

### THE “OFFICIAL” PROCESSES:

The funeral director will carry out the following (as part of the standard service provided) but will need both passport and residencia for some of the formalities:

- Registry of the death at the Civil registry and obtaining of the death certificate (note – request at least two originals and some copies – many later processes require the production of the death certificate)
- Notification to the Comu of the death (to remove the deceased from the register of inhabitants only)
- Arranging for the funeral (assuming a normal local catholic service and burial or cremation is required all costs are included except the fee for the parish priest)
- Mechanical arrangements for any cemetery (obtaining of keys, opening and sealing of niches)

See the separate notes “things that have to be done after obtaining the death certificate” – but do not rush these as (for instance) bank accounts are “frozen” on notification of death and a number of services will be needed for some time after the death (eg electricity, telephone, etc). Think about what they imply and then act.

Probate – this may well be a complex situation and separate thought needs be given to this. Note that it is a notary that issues probate here and it is necessary to determine whether:

- There is an Andorran will – which will be used to obtain local probate with the death certificate, a certificate obtained by the notary that no other Andorran will has been registered, and a certificate from the country of nationality of the deceased that there is no other will deposited there (this is an impossibility for UK passport holders born in England or Wales and for passport holders from many “Anglo Saxon” countries – the notary may in these cases may require probate of the Andorran will in the country of nationality before issuing local probate or may accept that this certificate does not exist – the practice varies among notaries – see notes on Notaries below).
- There is no Andorran will – to deal with Andorran property local probate will be required from an Andorran notary using the foreign probate and will (both

translated into Spanish or Catalan by an official translator and apostilled under the Hague Convention) and the original death certificate; the notary will also require a local certificate stating that no will has been drawn up and registered in Andorra (which he will obtain). Note that local banks will need exactly the same data for their legal departments – ie it is probably worthwhile going via the notary to obtain local probate as that will enable all local assets to be dealt with directly.

Individual advice will almost certainly need to be taken here. A number of residents have used Nadia Aleix (820233) who speaks English and whose father was a notary to help them. Simon Binsted (324252) directly as a licensed gestor himself and via the company Servissim has also been used by a number of residents here. Servissim has been providing a gestor service for resident property owners for many years that specifically includes services that would be needed in the event of a death.

Note that notaries deal with the heirs (there is generally no figure of executor in an Andorran will) and that heirs are required to either attend in person to accept the legacy on certification of the will (ie probate) or sign a certificate of acceptance which has to be notarized, officially translated and apostilled and delivered to the notary. Also, where the executor is not a resident or the beneficiary is not a resident somebody locally will almost certainly need powers of attorney to do things officially here – which have to be granted in front of a notary. Notarial fees are based on standard tables of fees for specific documents and services and also on the value of the estate – so certain fees may appear high where a valuable property is the main asset for instance.

#### NOTES:

Costs – assuming rental of a niche in a lower priced parish, a simple coffin, mortuary fees, funeral company fees, some flowers, a local church funeral service with an organist and the a simple headstone, total funeral costs are likely to be in the region of €2,500 to €3,000. With cremation (and an urn) instead of niche and headstone the funeral costs are likely to be in the region of € 2,000 to €2,500.

#### Funeral companies:

- Funeraria Sixto (Andorra la Vella) – 807180 (often used – they have somebody available who does speak English)
- Pompes Funebres Andorranes (Andorra la Vella)– 822466/321466 (the biggest)
- Pompes Funebres de las Valls (Andorra la Vella) – 866632
- P Marsenyach (Encamp) – 831236 (have somebody available who does speak English)

Flowers – are not obligatory or included in the funeral company pricing – they will buy for you though (wreaths start at close to €100) – it is normal for flowers from relatives and friends to be delivered to the funeral company (florists normally provide this service)

– flowers for the chapel or church have to be separately purchased and arranged by the family.

Headstones – these are not obligatory in cemeteries but can be arranged for after the funeral via the funeral company which will also advise on any specific parochial regulations about them.

Niches (ninxols) – the prices vary widely between the parishes and the normal rental period is only six years (eight in Escaldes); the range of prices for rental is from around €500 to well over €1,000 depending on the parish.

Notaries – see the yellow pages; there are four notaries currently in practice; Bartumeu’s office has indicated that for his office foreign probate is needed where a certificate of no other will existing cannot be obtained; Ferrandiz’s office has granted local probate for a long term resident with an Andorran will without any such formality; Estañol’s office has accepted that for UK citizens resident in Andorra with a clear Andorran “universal will” probate will be granted without any such formality.

Scattering of ashes – there appears to be no local restriction on this being done; there are restrictions in other countries (eg France) that may need to be considered.

Transporting a body abroad – the funeral company is able to arrange this. Pricing varies significantly depending on distance, airline used, etc. It is never cheap and there are relevant formalities to consider here, in transportation and on reception. It is much easier to remove ashes after a cremation. Note that removal of the body (or even remains) of a UK national back to the UK will almost certainly affect the determination of domicile of the deceased.