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Shipping Cremated Remains – What's New?

In case you missed it, The United States Postal Service (USPS) recently announced new protocols pertaining to shipping cremated remains. Here is a quick overview of the new protocols and how it might pertain to your business and your clients:

- Customers shipping Cremated Remains must use Priority Mail Express (PME) service only.
- Cremated Remains packages mailed via the Priority Mail Express service will be limited to only four shipping options:
 - Signature Required
 - Signature Waived
 - Return Receipt and
 - Additional Insurance
- Customers must use the new, Label 139 or the new cremated remains.
- Optional Cremated Remains Kits are available for order at USPS.com.



These new protocols are very important to the shipping process. In case you aren't completely familiar with the recommended exercises surrounding this matter, below are two important points to keep in mind when handling the shipment of cremated remains.

No. 1: The USPS is the only “mail/delivery” service that knowingly accepts cremated remains for transport.

I often review cremation authorization forms that include a notification to customers that cremated remains will be mailed via USPS Priority Mail or another shipping service that utilizes a tracking system. I strike all references to any shipping service other than the USPS Priority Mail service. Because the USPS is the only service that will acknowledge acceptance of cremated remains for transport, it is the only system that should be utilized.

No. 2: Your cremation authorization form or authorization for disposition of cremated remains form should include indemnification for you when you ship cremated remains using the USPS system.

Nearly every cremation authorization or authorization for disposition of cremated remains form includes an indemnification paragraph. The indemnification paragraph is where the person authorizing the



cremation/disposition agrees to hold the funeral home and crematory harmless for actions taken pursuant to the authorization. Most indemnification paragraphs don't include a provision regarding to the actions occurring after the funeral home or cemetery is no longer responsible of the cremated remains – when the cremated remains are being transported. Your cremation authorization should include within its indemnification provision a release from claims or actions resulting from “shipping the cremated remains via Priority Express Mail by the United States Postal Service.”

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