

Cremated Remains Cannot Be Sent By Express Mail

By
Harvey I. Lapin
CANA General Counsel
Harvey I. Lapin & Associates, P.C.
Northbrook, Illinois

On February 24, 2000, the U.S. Post Office issued Postal Bulletin 22018 as a reminder to postal employees. This bulletin was intended to clarify the approved method of mailing cremated remains. According to the bulletin:

“Postal employees are reminded that human remains (e.g., an urn with ashes) must be sent as registered mail with return receipt services. Employees who do not enforce this regulation risk putting the Postal Service in the uncomfortable position of losing or delaying these items, possibly at the great emotional distress to families of deceased persons.”

The bulletin continued with the following quote from Publication 52, issued in July, 1999, and entitled “Hazardous, Restricted and Perishable Mail.”

“462.2 Cremated Remains

Human ashes are permitted to be mailed provided they are packaged as required in 483b. The identity of the contents should be marked on the address side. Mail pieces must be sent registered mail with return receipt requested.”

The packaging requirements in Section 463b of Publication 52 are under the subject of powders. Section 463b provides as follows:

“Powders. Dry materials that could cause damage, discomfort, destruction, or soiling upon escape (i.e. leakage) must be packed in sift-proof containers or other containers that are sealed in durable sift-proof outer containers.”

The purpose of Postal Bulletin 22018 is to clarify for postal employees that cremated remains are not to be sent by overnight express mail, regular mail or certified mail. While Postal Bulletin 22018 was issued in late February, it is possible that your local post office may not be currently following the restated rules. It is expected that all post offices will be complying within the near future. Members can access Publication 52 by searching for it on the Post Office Internet site at www.usps.com.