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 U.S. Department of Transportation

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## Protect Your Move

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

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## Ready to Move?—Tips for a Successful Interstate Move

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This is a Web, or HTML, version of the brochure that has been developed by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to assist you in making yours a successful [interstate](#) move. While most household moves go smoothly, FMCSA is concerned about consumers who experience difficulties in resolving disputes with household goods carriers (movers)—or worse, are defrauded by dishonest movers. We want you to be informed and aware of your options and we desire to help you choose a reputable mover. (You may download and print a PDF version of the actual pamphlet using the link near the top of this page.)

FMCSA regulates interstate household goods movers and requires them to register with the Agency. These movers must provide each customer with the names of process agents in every state in which they operate, so that legal documents can be served on the mover, if required. For the protection of your household goods, FMCSA also requires registered movers to have proof of cargo insurance.

### Know Your Rights and Responsibilities Before Selecting a Mover

Before moving your goods, movers are required to give you a pamphlet entitled *Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move*. It provides basic information that will help you understand the documents that the mover will ask you to sign. The pamphlet also explains your rights if your household goods are lost or damaged by the mover. A copy of that pamphlet can be downloaded from the section of this Web site entitled [Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move](#).

### Use *Only* Registered Movers

Make sure the mover you select has been assigned a USDOT number, is licensed by FMCSA to engage in interstate transportation of household goods, and has proper insurance. You can determine if a mover is registered with FMCSA by accessing the [licensing and insurance](#) section of this Web site, or by calling FMCSA at (202) 366-9805 for licensing and (202) 385-2423 for insurance.

### Read and Understand *All* Information Provided by the Mover

*The mover should provide you with the following basic documents as part of your move:*

### Related Links

[Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move](#)
[Moving Checklist](#)

### Estimates

The estimate should clearly describe, *in writing*, all charges for services the mover will perform. Make sure the estimate is signed by the mover. *Do not accept oral estimates.*

### Order For Service

The order for service is a list of all the services the carrier will perform and shows the dates your household goods will be picked up and delivered.

### Bill of Lading

The bill of lading is a contract between you and the mover and a receipt of your belongings. You should be given a completed copy of the bill of lading *before* your goods are loaded.

### Inventory List

The inventory is the receipt showing each item you shipped and its condition. Be sure you receive a written copy of the inventory after your household goods are loaded, and that you agree with its description of your household goods' condition.

## What if There Is a Problem?

### Dispute Settlement Program

Before moving your household goods, interstate movers are required to provide you with information regarding their dispute settlement program. Movers must offer a neutral arbitration program as a means of settling disputes that may arise concerning loss or damage of your household goods.

### Loss or Damage of Goods

If your goods are damaged or missing at delivery, request a company claim form from the mover. Complete the claim form to the best of your ability. The mover will tell you where to mail the completed form. You must file a written claim with the mover within 9 months of delivery. Your claim must be in writing but does not have to be submitted on a mover's claim form. It is suggested that you send the claims information to the mover by certified mail.

If you are not satisfied with the settlement offer made by the mover, you have the option of submitting a loss and damage claim with the carrier's dispute settlement program or of seeking other legal remedies.

### Applicable Transportation Charges

The charges that a mover assesses for its services must be contained in a published tariff, which must be made available to you upon request. If you feel that a mover has overcharged you, you can contact the Surface Transportation Board at (866) 254-1792 to obtain assistance.

### Filing a Complaint

FMCSA does not have authority to resolve claims against a moving company. However, you can file a complaint against the mover by calling FMCSA's 24-hour toll-free hotline at (888) 368-7238, or by going to FMCSA's [Complaint Web site](#). Your complaint may trigger a Federal enforcement investigation against the mover.

### Remember:

**DO NOT SIGN BLANK PAPERWORK OR DOCUMENTS YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND!**

**The best way to avoid problems is to be informed and plan ahead.**

### **Before the Move**

Ask for recommendations from neighbors, friends, and relatives regarding the mover.  
Obtain the booklet Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move from the mover.  
Check with the Better Business Bureau regarding the mover.  
Find out what the mover's responsibilities are for damages that may occur to your belongings.  
Ask if the mover has a dispute settlement program.  
Obtain estimates from at least three movers, and compare costs and all other services to be provided by the mover.  
Check to determine whether the interstate mover is registered with FMCSA, and has a USDOT number.  
Find out how and when pickup and delivery of your household goods will occur.  
Ask the mover how they can be contacted before the move, during the move, and after the move.

### **Moving Day**

Be present to answer questions and give directions to the movers. Stay until they finish.  
Accompany the movers as they inventory your household goods and resolve any questions regarding the condition of materials being moved.  
Carefully read the information on the estimate, order for service, bill of lading, inventory, and all other completed documents before you sign them.  
Keep the bill of lading until your goods are delivered, the charges are paid, and any claims are settled.  
Before the moving van leaves, take one final look throughout the house to make certain nothing has been left behind.  
Give the driver directions to your new home.  
Inform the driver and the moving company of where you can be reached during the move.

### **Delivery Day**

Be present to answer any questions and give directions.  
Pay the driver before your goods are unloaded.  
Supervise unloading and unpacking of your goods.  
Note on the inventory list all boxes or other items that are damaged before you sign any documents.

### **Useful Web Sites & Telephone Numbers**

What is the FMCSA official Web site?

<http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov>

Where can I get a copy of Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move?

<http://www.protectyourmove.gov/consumer/awareness/rights/rights.htm>

Where can I find out whether a mover is registered with FMCSA?

[www.protectyourmove.gov](http://www.protectyourmove.gov) , or call (202) 366-9805

Where can I obtain information about a mover, broker, or freight forwarder's insurance and process agent?

[www.protectyourmove.gov](http://www.protectyourmove.gov) (search for the mover and then use the "Insurance" link) , or call (202) 385-2423

How do I get assistance to determine if a carrier has assessed the correct transportation charges?

Call the Surface Transportation Board at (866) 254-1792

Where may I file a complaint against a mover?

<http://nccdb.fmcsa.dot.gov> , or call FMCSA's 24-hour toll-free hotline at (888) 368-7238.

How can I learn more about movers and transportation?

<http://www.moving.org/>

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