

protect
your memories.
your money.
move.

Press Kit

www.protectyourmove.gov



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration



www.protectyourmove.gov

Table of Contents

- ▶ **Press Release**

- ▶ **Household Goods Fact Sheet**

- ▶ **Red Flags of Moving Fraud**

- ▶ **Moving Fraud Prevention Checklist**

- ▶ **Moving Checklist**



U.S. Department of Transportation
Office of Public Affairs
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590
www.dot.gov/briefing-room.html

News

FMCSA 18-13
Wednesday, April 17, 2013
Contact: Shashunga Clayton
Tel: 202-366-9999

U.S. Department of Transportation Launches “Protect Your Move” Campaign to Help Consumers Spot the “Red Flags” of Moving Fraud

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) today announced the launch of its new moving fraud prevention campaign to inform consumers about how to spot the “red flags” of fraudulent or dishonest movers.

The “Protect Your Move” campaign (www.protectyourmove.gov) seeks to give the nearly 35 million Americans who move each year the information they need to protect themselves from unlawful movers.

“Moving is an exciting, but hectic time – the last thing families should have to worry about is whether or not their personal belongings will arrive at their new house,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “By showing consumers how to look out for red flags before they move, we are arming them with information they can use to protect themselves, their move and their memories.”

FMCSA has produced a new public service announcement warning consumers of the “red flags” they can spot prior to a move. By visiting www.protectyourmove.gov, consumers can view the video, and find tools and resources to help them before, during and after a move. Resources include a moving fraud prevention checklist, a moving broker checklist and tips for a successful move. Consumers can also search a company's complaint history and compare safety records of companies nationally.

“Consumers need to know how to spot the bad movers and feel confident they are selecting a reliable, safe, and responsible moving company,” said FMCSA Administrator Anne S. Ferro. “While the majority of movers are reputable, consumers need to be aware of how to avoid those who are not.”

More than 5,800 household goods moving companies are registered with FMCSA. In 2012, FMCSA received over 3,100 consumer complaints about household goods movers, up from 2,851 in 2011. Among the most common complaints are shipments being held hostage; loss, damage or delay of shipments; unauthorized movers; and deceptive practices, such as overcharges.

Nationwide, the top ten cities with the greatest number of consumer complaints in 2012 were New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Las Vegas, Atlanta, Seattle, Orlando, San Antonio, and San Diego.

Some of the most common “red flags” of fraudulent or dishonest moving companies include:

- Not providing an in-home estimate,
- Asking customers to sign incomplete documentation, and
- A company failing to register with FMCSA.

Consumers can report unsafe and poor performing moving companies by calling FMCSA's nationwide complaint hotline at 1-888-368-7238 (1-888 DOT-SAFT) or by visiting www.protectyourmove.gov.

###

HOUSEHOLD GOODS FACT SHEET

Every year, 35 million Americans make a move into a new home, and the spring and summer seasons are usually the busiest time of year for moving companies. While most families will make their moves safely and efficiently, thousands of others are taken advantage of by unlawful movers who ask for additional money before delivering their personal possessions or do not deliver them at all.

The Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) oversees more than 5,800 registered moving companies, and last year it received more than 3,100 consumer complaints regarding household goods movers. Through its Protect Your Move campaign, FMCSA is helping consumers avoid similar headaches and heartache by spotting bad moving companies before they are hired. Learn more about how you can protect your memories, protect your money and protect your move by visiting www.ProtectYourMove.gov.

Moving Fraud Can Happen to You

- ▶ In 2012, FMCSA received 3,119 consumer complaints against HHG companies.
- ▶ Complaints included reports of loss, damage, delayed shipments, deceptive business practices, and shipments held hostage.
- ▶ Consumers filed complaints from all 50 states.
- ▶ The top ten cities with the most complaints in 2012 were New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Las Vegas, Atlanta, Seattle, Orlando, San Antonio, and San Diego.

How FMCSA is Cracking Down on Unlawful Movers

- ▶ FMCSA oversees more than 5,800 registered household goods moving companies that operate across state lines.
- ▶ Consumers who think they have been a victim of moving fraud can file a complaint by calling FMCSA's dedicated Consumer Safety Hotline (1-888-DOT-SAFT) or visiting the www.ProtectYourMove.gov website.
- ▶ All complaints filed in the National Consumer Complaint Database are reviewed by FMCSA personnel. Each complaint helps us identify the most unscrupulous carriers and assists us in prioritizing future investigations.
- ▶ FMCSA prioritizes hostage load complaints, where a consumer's goods are being held by a moving company until more money is paid. Complaints that fall outside FMCSA's

jurisdiction, such as a move within one state, are referred to state law enforcement partners.

- ▶ In 2012, FMCSA successfully closed 72 enforcement actions levying \$308,773 in fines against rogue moving companies. The top two states in enforcement activity were California with 26 enforcement actions resulting in \$47,810 in fines, and New York with 9 enforcement actions resulting in \$16,628 in fines.
- ▶ Under the most recent transportation bill, FMCSA was given the authority to—
 - Order an unscrupulous moving company to return hostage goods to an aggrieved shipper;
 - Require carriers to successfully pass an examination to demonstrate knowledge of safety and consumer protection regulations before receiving authority to operate; and
 - Assign all or a portion of hostage load civil penalty to an aggrieved shipper.
- ▶ FMCSA is partnering with state law enforcement offices in Louisiana, Ohio and Texas to crack down on moving companies that operate within state lines, and is currently pursuing partnerships in other states.

How YOU Can Protect Your Move

- ▶ Visit FMCSA's moving fraud website, www.protectyourmove.gov. You can download the Moving Fraud Prevention Checklist and view the Red Flags of moving fraud there.
- ▶ Learn how to Protect Your Move before hiring a moving company. While FMCSA can help you recover from an experience with an unlawful moving company, it's best to avoid becoming a victim of moving fraud altogether.
- ▶ Educate yourself on your rights and how to spot the Red Flags of Moving Fraud, such as refusing an on-site estimate, asking to sign a blank document, or demanding cash before the move.

###

Red Flags of Moving Fraud

Rogue movers typically work like this: without ever visiting your home or seeing the goods you want moved, they give a low-ball estimate over the phone or Internet. Once your goods are on their truck, they demand more money before they'll deliver or unload them. They hold your goods hostage and force you to pay more—sometimes much more than you thought you had agreed to—if you want your possessions back.

Your best defense is to recognize a rogue mover before they have your goods. Here are the "**red flags**" to look out for:

No inspection

- ▶ The mover doesn't offer or agree to an on-site inspection of your household goods and gives an estimate over the phone or Internet—sight-unseen. These estimates often sound too good-to-be-true. They usually are.

Payment first

- ▶ The moving company demands cash or a large deposit before the move.

Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move

- ▶ The mover doesn't provide you with a copy of "[Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move](#)," a booklet movers are required by Federal regulations to supply to their customers in the planning stages of interstate moves.

No local address, license or insurance

- ▶ The company's Web site has no local address and no information about licensing or insurance.

Mover claims

- ▶ The mover claims all goods are covered by their insurance.

No company name

- ▶ When you call the mover, the telephone is answered with a generic "Movers" or "Moving company," rather than the company's name.

Office conditions

- ▶ Offices and warehouse are in poor condition or nonexistent.

Generic Rental truck

- ▶ On moving day, a rental truck arrives rather than a company-owned and marked fleet truck.

Are You **Planning to Move?**



Moving is a significant event in anyone's life. While most moves go smoothly, there are some dishonest or "rogue" movers that may try to take advantage of you. The best defense against moving fraud is to be informed and aware of your options when choosing a moving company. Listed below are some important points you should know to avoid becoming a victim of moving fraud.

- ✓ Make sure the mover or broker is registered with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) by visiting www.protectyourmove.gov.
- ✓ Check the complaint record of a mover or broker at www.protectyourmove.gov.
- ✓ Avoid movers that do not show U.S. DOT numbers and brokers that do not show Motor Carrier (MC) numbers in their advertisements.
- ✓ Read "*Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move*" and the "*Ready to Move*" brochure on www.protectyourmove.gov. Your mover or broker is required to provide this information to you.
- ✓ Movers must give written estimates. Brokers must issue written estimates if they provide estimates.
- ✓ **Do not sign blank or incomplete documents.**
- ✓ Make sure you understand the type of liability you sign for. This is a common pitfall for consumers. Ask yourself if 60 cents per pound is enough coverage for all your household goods if the unexpected happens.
- ✓ Supervise loading and unloading of your household goods. If you are not available, appoint a representative to act on your behalf.

You may file a complaint against a mover or broker by visiting www.protectyourmove.gov or calling 1-888-DOT-SAFT (1-888-368-7238) Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

Do your part. Protect your move.

Visit www.protectyourmove.gov



you move.

Task	Notes
Planning - Before You Move	
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain the booklet <i>Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move</i> from the mover.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask for recommendations from neighbors, friends, and relatives regarding the mover.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check with the Better Business Bureau regarding the mover.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Find out what the mover's responsibilities are for damages that may occur to your belongings.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask if the mover has a dispute settlement program.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain estimates from at least three movers, and compare cost and all other services to be provided by the mover.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Check to determine whether the interstate mover is registered with FMCSA, and has a USDOT number.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Find out how and when pickup and delivery of your household goods will occur.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask the mover how they can be contacted before the move, during the move, and after the move.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Adequately insure your belongings.	
Moving Day	
<input type="checkbox"/> Be present to answer questions and give directions to the movers. Stay until they finish.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Accompany the movers as they inventory your household goods and resolve any questions regarding the condition of materials being moved.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Carefully read the information on the estimate, order for service, bill of lading, inventory, and all other completed documents before you sign them.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Keep the bill of lading until your goods are delivered, the charges are paid, and any claims are settled.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Before the moving van leaves, take one final look throughout the house to make certain nothing has been left behind.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Give the driver directions to your new house.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Inform the driver and the moving company of where you can be reached during the move.	
Delivery Day	
<input type="checkbox"/> Be present to answer any questions and give directions.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pay the driver, according to the term of your agreement, before your goods are unloaded.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Supervise unloading and unpacking of your goods.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Note on the inventory list all boxes or other items that are damaged before you sign any documents.	