



Things You Should Know About... **HOUSEHOLD MOVES**

During the Move, Taking Inventory of Your Possessions

After the moving truck arrives, but before loading begins, you may ask the carrier to make an inventory of your property. Accompany the mover while this list is prepared. If you disagree with anything on the inventory, make a note of it before you sign the form. Make sure the inventory is legible and accurate and that any notations also appear on your copy. You may have to pay extra for the time it takes to complete the inventory (e.g., if you are paying an hourly rate for the move), but it's a price worth paying if you need to make a claim after the move.

Reviewing Your Bill of Lading

The bill of lading is your contract with the mover. It states the mover's responsibilities, such as the services they will perform, when and how they will charge for the move, and what their liability is. Be sure you understand all parts of the bill of lading, including the section detailing the carrier's liability, and get a copy. **DO NOT** sign the contract until you understand and agree with it. Remember, movers are required to issue you a bill of lading, so don't hire a mover who doesn't want to use one.

Packing and Loading

Depending on your agreement with your carrier, you may be asked to do some of the preparation for the move. If you're doing your own packing, be careful about overloading cartons. Be sure to use appropriate cartons so your goods will arrive safely. Carton tops should be flat and taped securely for easy handling and safe stacking on the truck. To avoid damage, do not pack fragile items and heavy items in the same carton. Mark fragile cartons. **DO NOT** pack valuables (such as jewelry, money, etc.), medication, or important papers to be taken on the moving truck. The mover is not responsible for these items. Remember, it's first in, last out when loading any truck. Keep items such as toiletries, medicines, and other necessities with you. Your mover may have more tips for preparing for your move. Don't be afraid to ask.

Delivery

Be at the destination site at the time agreed upon for delivery. If you are not there and delivery can't be made because of your absence, your property may be put in storage. You will then be responsible for storage charges.

Check the condition of your property before signing a delivery receipt. This includes checking any boxes which you do not intend to immediately unpack. If there is damage or loss, make a written notation on the inventory or bill of lading. Be specific! Make sure the notations appear on both copies (yours and the carrier's).

Payment is due **BEFORE** goods are unloaded, unless you have made credit or other arrangements with the mover. If charges are more than 110 percent of the written estimate, the mover is required to give you thirty days to pay the balance.

After the Move, Filing a Claim

If you suffer any loss or damage as a result of a move, you must file a claim **IN WRITING** within nine months of the date of delivery. Even if you have an accurate description of the loss or damage on the inventory or bill of lading, you must still file a written claim in the form of either a letter or a claim provided by the mover. Specifically describe the loss or damage and include a copy of the inventory and/or bill of lading.

Movers must acknowledge written claims within 30 days and either pay, settle, or deny the

claim within 120 days. Keep damaged property and packing materials – the mover has a right to inspect damaged property before settling a claim. Do not have damaged property repaired or replaced without consulting the mover. Doing so may jeopardize your potential settlement.

Resolving Disputes

If you and the mover have a dispute regarding either the cost of the move or lost or damaged property, you should try to reach a mutually agreeable settlement with the mover. However, if this is impossible, you may pursue your claim with the assistance of certain governmental agencies. The agency best suited to fit your needs depends on the type of move you completed: a move from one point to another within state lines (an intrastate move), or a move from one state to another (an interstate move).

Intrastate Moves

For disputes arising from moves occurring completely within the state of Illinois, the Illinois Commerce Commission has a dispute resolution service available for consumers. The Commission will first attempt to mediate the dispute. If no resolution is reached through mediation, you may submit the dispute for binding arbitration. The arbitration service charges a fee and both you and the mover are bound by the arbitrator's decision.

Interstate Moves

For disputes concerning state-to-state moves, complaints can be referred to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. The Administration uses an informal mediation process to resolve these types of consumer complaints.

Keys to a Successful Move

The best way to avoid problems is to plan ahead and be prepared. No two moving companies are the same, and some are better than others. It is worth your time and effort to:

- Choose carefully – only use a mover licensed by the Illinois Commerce Commission. Ask the moving company to provide its license number (the number should be on all advertising and paperwork) and use that number to check the mover's complaint record.
- Get and keep a signed written estimate.
- Be ready when the mover arrives.
- Accompany the mover to make up an inventory.
- Understand and agree with the bill of lading before you sign it.
- Before your move, ask the moving company to explain its limits of liability and your options for loss and damage protection.
- Be at the destination at the time agreed upon for delivery.
- Check the condition of your property before you sign a delivery receipt.
- Keep copies of all documentation pertaining to your move.

For more information contact: Illinois Commerce Commission, 527 E. Capitol Avenue
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