

Avoid Moving Scams this Summer

AMSA and BBB Offer Advice on How to Protect Your Move

ALEXANDRIA, Va. -- Following a few simple rules when looking for a mover will go a long way toward protecting you from being victimized by scammers this summer, advises the Better Business Bureau (BBB) and the American Moving & Storage Association (AMSA).

May is National Moving Month, the start of the busiest time of the year for changing residences. More than 37 million Americans -- or about 13 percent -- move to a different home every year, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau statistics. Unfortunately, every year, BBB receives extremely serious complaints from consumers who fell prey to dishonest and sometimes unlicensed moving companies.

BBB received more than 8,400 complaints against movers in 2009. Complaints to BBB about movers are primarily about damaged or lost goods and final prices in excess of original estimates. In a common worst-case scenario, the moving company will essentially hold the customer's belongings hostage and require potentially thousands of dollars to unload the truck.

"Virtually anyone with a truck and a Web site can claim to be a mover and they can't all be trusted to adhere to standards for honesty and ethical conduct," said AMSA President and CEO Linda Bauer Darr. "When it comes to such an important decision, you can save a lot of heartache by doing just a little homework to track down the companies that put customer service and integrity first. For interstate moves, that means an AMSA certified ProMover."

"Checking a mover's credentials is critical and easy. Last year alone, consumers relied on BBB more than 1 million times for finding a trustworthy mover," said Stephen A. Cox, President and CEO of the Council of Better Business Bureaus. "When making the final choice, go with a BBB Accredited Businesses or, at the very least, choose a business that has a good rating with BBB."

BBB and AMSA offer the following checklist for finding a trustworthy moving company:

- **Research the company thoroughly.** While state regulations vary, all interstate movers must, at minimum, be licensed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and are assigned a motor carrier number you can verify at www.protectyourmove.gov. Also check the company's rating with your BBB; BBB maintains more than 17,000 reliability reports on movers across North America. Having at least a satisfactory BBB rating is one of seven screenings that AMSA relies on when authorizing its interstate mover members to display the ProMover logo, the sign of a quality, professional mover which has pledged to abide by the organization's Code of Ethics.
- **Get at Least Three *In-Home* Estimates.** No legitimate mover will offer to give you a firm estimate on-line or over the phone. Also keep in mind that the lowest estimate can sometimes be an unrealistic low-ball offer which can cost you more in the end.
- **Know Your Rights.** Research your rights as a consumer with both the state you currently reside in and where you are moving to. Also enlist the help of BBB or local law enforcement if the moving company fails to live up to its promises or decides to hold your belongings hostage.

More tips and information on how to choose a mover and plan your move are available at AMSA's consumer Web site, www.moving.org; and the U.S. Department of Transportation's

site, www.protectyourmove.gov To research a mover or find your nearest Better Business Bureau, visit www.bbb.org.

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About AMSA

The American Moving & Storage Association, headquartered in Alexandria, Va., is the trade association representing the nation's moving and storage companies, which provide household goods moving services, specialized transportation for sensitive freight such as computers and trade show exhibits, and warehouse storage services. The association has 3,200 members, including more than 200 international members, and sponsors programs and activities that promote consumer protection, professional development, safety, and operational efficiency.

About BBB

BBB, the leader in advancing marketplace trust, is an unbiased non-profit organization that sets and upholds high standards for fair and honest business behavior. Businesses that earn BBB accreditation contractually agree and adhere to the organization's high standards of ethical business behavior. BBB provides objective advice, free business BBB Reliability Reports[®] and charity BBB Wise Giving Reports[®], and educational information on topics affecting marketplace trust.