



How to Choose A Licensed and Insured Moving Company!

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Avoid Broker Services

Moving brokers are sales teams that book your move and sell it to the lowest bidding trucker. Many broker services operate under names that make it seem like they are a moving company, which is very deceiving.

Most brokers sell your move to unlicensed and uninsured moving companies. A moving broker is not a mover. A broker does not assume responsibility for, and is not authorized to transport, your household goods. Brokers do not have moving trucks or professional movers.

Sometimes the broker is not able to sell the job to someone for various reasons – low estimates, no availability, limited resources, etc. – and in this case you can get stuck without someone showing up on the day of your move. Many moving brokers operate from call centers located anywhere in the world. Most take non-refundable upfront deposits. This is a red flag!

Only Use Licensed Moving Companies

Moving companies are the firms that do the actual move. They own trucks and moving equipment and have a professional moving staff. Moving companies will come to the house and give an estimate for performing the move, which will most likely be more accurate than the estimate from a moving broker. The price will normally depend on the weight and amount of the items and the distance of the move.

While making an agreement with a moving company might provide more confidence with a move, since the company can be held liable for anything that goes wrong with a move, there are additional fees to consider when using professional movers, including extra valuation coverage for the goods; additional services, such as preparing appliances for the move or moving a piano.

Insurance and Valuation Protection

All moving companies are required to assume liability for the value of the goods that they transport. The two different levels of liability that movers are required to provide are explained below

FULL (REPLACEMENT) VALUE PROTECTION

This is the most comprehensive plan available for the protection of your goods. Unless you select the Alternative Level of Liability described below, your shipment will be transported under your mover's FULL (REPLACEMENT) VALUE level of liability. If any article is lost, destroyed or damaged while in your mover's custody, your mover will, at its option, either 1) repair the article to the extent necessary to restore it to the same condition as when it was received by your mover, or pay you for the cost of such repairs; or 2) replace the article with an article of like kind and quality, or pay you for the cost of such a replacement.

ALTERNATIVE LEVEL OF LIABILITY – Released Value of 60 Cents Per Pound Per Article.

This is the most economical protection available; however, this no-cost option provides only minimal protection. Under this option, the mover assumes liability for no more than 60 cents per pound, per article.

Common Red Flags

#1 They price by Cubic Feet, and Not Weight.

All legitimate moving companies use weight to calculate the cost for your move.

Why? Weight is the great equalizer.

Now, let's say you're moving company charges by the cubic foot. How they price your move will ultimately depend on how well they pack your moving container. Until the team starts packing, they will not know how everything fits together. As a result, you really do not have any idea how much it will cost you to ship your chair. Additionally, there is really no incentive for the company to pack your load efficiently since they are charging based on volume.

#2 They request a deposit.

Reputable movers will NOT demand cash or any deposit before moving you. You generally pay upon delivery. If you pay up front, you have zero control over when you will see your belongings.

#3 Name Changes.

Some companies get around the Better Business Bureau and other such scam busters by constantly doing business under new names. Be sure the company has a local address and information about licensing and insurance. They should identify themselves by using the full name of the business, not just “moving services” or something else generic

#4 They only do over the phone surveys or over email surveys.

You as the customer should feel confident in the company you are hiring. A over the phone survey, or email survey is not going to cut it. The best way to get an accurate quote for your move is to have someone come out and physically assess your items or do a live face to face video survey through zoom or other platforms.

In person surveys, and live video surveys are accurate and safe ways to correctly assess the size of your move. A reputable moving company should have the technology to perform a video survey, at no charge to complete a written estimate. If they seem reluctant, you may want to consider looking for someone else. **And remember, a written estimate is required by federal law**

#5 Other Common Red Flags.

- The company's website has **no local address** and no information about their DOT number or insurance.
- When you call the mover, **the telephone is answered with a generic "Movers" or "Moving company,"** rather than the company's name.
- Offices and warehouse are in poor condition or nonexistent.
- The mover says they will determine the charges after loading.
- On moving day, a rental truck arrives rather than a company-owned or marked fleet truck.

How to Choose a Moving Company

1. Get Referrals

Searching the Internet or browsing a phone book for moving companies can be daunting. Start by asking friends, family members and coworkers if they can recommend a moving company. If you are working with a real estate agent, ask the agent for a referral.

2. Check with the Better Business Bureau (BBB)

Research the moving company's track record with the BBB, which you can do free online. Stick with moving companies that are BBB accredited or at least have a good rating. If the moving company is not listed with the BBB, consider looking for one that is.

3. Verify the Address

Ask for a business card or pull up the mover's website and then look up the listed address online or through the phonebook. Make sure the moving company's address is listed and registered under the company names. Be wary of any address listed under a residential name.

4. Make Sure the Mover Is Licensed and Insured

If you are moving Intrastate (within) California use the [California Public Utilities Commission](#) website to verify that they are insured and licensed to operate as a household goods mover in California.

If you are moving Interstate (cross state lines) use [the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration](#) website to verify the DOT number given to you by the moving company, you are working with. When a moving company is an AGENT for a major van line, the moving company can cross state lines while using their van lines DOT number.

5. Ask About Professional Accreditation

This is one of the most important factors.

Reputable licensed movers are certified by at least one industry association, like the American Moving and Storage Association (AMSA) or Better Business Bureau. AMSA provides reputable companies with a ProMover title. ProMover is a consumer certification and protection program that helps consumers to distinguish professional movers from scammers.

Getting the ProMover certification is not a walk in the park; a company must meet stringent industry requirements that include proper licensing and insurance coverage.

Movers also must undergo a thorough background check by AMSA. They are also screened and monitored by AMSA to make sure they are upholding the AMSA code of ethics, which includes licensing and insurance covers.

When looking for an ideal licensed moving company, prioritize those that belong to professional associations.

All ProMovers must undergo a yearly review that guarantees the industry players are abiding by the industry requirements. By knowing which movers to stay away from, you significantly narrow your search to the most ideal moving companies that meet all insurance and licensing requirements.

If the company is not listed on the AMSA pro movers list and isn't A+ rated by the BBB, then consider looking for someone else.

AMSA [pro movers list](#).

BBB [Business Search](#)



6. Watch Out for Red Flags

Keep an eye out for red flags during the estimate. For example, most reputable moving companies will not ask for a cash deposit before you move. If the mover seems hungry to get the money upfront, it might not be a legit business. Be wary of any movers who show up in a rented moving van. A professional company will own its own equipment.

7. Check Google Reviews

Only use Google, Facebook, and BBB for real customer reviews on business. Many websites such as Yelp, Consumers Advocate, Consumers Voice determine your “rating” by how much you pay them for advertising and such. Google, Facebook, and BBB are real customer reviews cannot be altered in any way by the business.

8. Assess the company’s professionalism and check social profiles.

Besides the technicalities of licenses and insurance, consumers need to use common sense when hiring a moving company. Be on the lookout for whether the movers are true professionals. Do they have a real office and business email address? Is the moving company part of a reputable van line? Are they wearing uniforms and driving professional moving trucks? Have they provided you with an official Bill of Lading? Is the estimate too good to be true? Do they possess an official business license?

Check social profiles for pictures of their equipment, staff, their work, etc. A reputable moving company should have their own trucks with the trucks clearly marked. Keep an eye out for an excessive amount of stock images or a shortage of information.

Moving Dictionary

Accessorial (Additional) Services

These are moving services that fall outside the standard transportation services and charges. Accessorial moving services can include packing, unpacking or appliance servicing. It might also include extra pick-up or deliveries at your request, or which are necessary due to unique circumstances or landlord requirements.

Agent

As a local moving company that also represents a national van line, your agent can handle functions such as storage, packing, surveys, booking, origin services, hauling and destination services. An agent is a privately owned moving company that is under contract with a van line. The agents must follow ALL the van lines rules and regulations. Agents are permitted to do intrastate moves using the van lines DOT number. Van Lines DO NOT SELL leads to agents. They all work together as one.

AMSA Certified Mover

The AMSA (American Moving & Storage Association) certifies interstate carriers who provide transportation for household moves under their own operating authority, as granted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHA), and who pledge to operate their moving business in a professional, efficient manner in accordance with the AMSA Code of Conduct.

AMSA Certified Van Line

The FHA certifies van lines to act as interstate carriers that transport moving shipments under their own authority. AMSA Certified Van Lines, like AMSA Certified Movers, also follow the AMSA Code of Conduct. Unlike Certified Movers, Van Lines rely on a network of agents across the US to provide the actual moving services such as origin, destination and hauling. The Van Lines are responsible for the quality of service provided by their moving agents.

Appliance Service

Preparing major electrical appliances in such a way that they are safe to move to your new home.

Bill of Lading

This is an important document that you must understand before you sign it. The Bill of Lading serves as a receipt for your household move, and it includes the contract for the transportation of your household goods. Do NOT sign the Bill of Lading until you have made sure that it is completely correct and be sure to keep your copy where you can find it.

Carrier

Your carrier is the professional moving company that transports your household goods to your new home.

Binding/Non-Binding Estimate

With a binding estimate, the mover guarantees the total cost of the move in advance based on the moving services to be provided and the quantities. A non-binding estimate is more like a quote, is not binding on the carrier, and the final charges will be calculated according to the actual weight of the shipment and the actual moving services provided with tariff provisions in effect.

Booking Agent

The booking agent can either be one person working independently or someone at your moving company. Your booking agent handles the initial steps of the move, which include: Informing the customer about the moving services available. Providing an estimate for the price of the move. Filling out the pre-move paperwork.

C.O.D.

In this form of payment for moving, the customer must pay for services at the time of delivery to the new home (or moving storage).

Change Order

If you need to add or remove items to be shipped or change the moving services from what is listed on your original moving estimate, the Change Order is the form you will need to use. The amount of the estimate will change accordingly.

Check-Off Sheet or bingo sheet

Every piece of furniture and each moving box has a numbered sticker corresponding to its entry on the check-off sheet, which is used at your new home to make sure all your household goods make it to their destination.

Contract Number

You will find this number on the Order of Service and Bill of Lading forms, in the upper right-hand corner. It is the number that the van line uses to identify your shipment of household goods.

Estimate

Reputable moving companies provides you with a free estimate that includes a general calculation of what the transportation charges will be, an estimation of shipping weight and the cost of any additional moving services you request.

Guaranteed Pickup/Delivery

This is a premium moving service in which the mover guarantees dates of service and reimburses the customer for delays. Guaranteed Pickup/Delivery commonly has minimum weight requirements.

High Value Article

Defined as items that have a value over \$100 per pound, high value items should be disclosed to the mover to make sure the proper precautions are taken in moving them.

Inventory

This is where the goods in your household move are listed with details, descriptions and the condition and number of each item.

Line-haul Charges

These charges apply to the transportation portion of your moving expenses and are in addition to your other moving service fees.

Long Carry

If it is necessary for the movers to carry items excessive distances between the moving truck and your residence, this additional charge will apply.

Move Coordinator

Your move coordinator will serve as your single point of contact, coordinating the details of your move from beginning to end and keeping you informed about the status of your move until final delivery of your shipment.

Order for Service

This document lists all the moving services you require and gives the moving company your authorization to transport your household belongings.

Pickup and Delivery Charges

These are separate moving charges that apply if you are transporting your household goods between a temporary moving storage and your residence.

Relocation Specialist

Your relocation specialist is the agent who can give you an estimate of the cost of your move and answer any questions you have about the moving process.

Shuttle Service

If your residence is not accessible to the equipment that your professional movers ordinarily use, shuttle service employs a smaller vehicle to “shuttle” items between the house and the moving truck.

Storage-In-Transit (SIT)

This is temporary storage of your belongings until time to deliver them to the destination. If your new home is not quite ready to move into, for example, you can request SIT service. SIT cannot exceed 90 days total, and additional charges apply for this service as well as fees for warehouse handling and your final moving charges.

Valuation

Sometimes also known as “Maximum Value Protection,” valuation is a charge based on the degree of “worth” of your moving shipment. It’s a way of compensating the moving company for taking on a greater degree of liability than what the base transportation charges would cover.

Van Line

A van line is a moving company that provides services nationwide through a network of affiliated agents. The van line authorizes its agents to transport interstate moving shipments, but handles all paperwork processing, dispatching, shipment routing and monitoring, and claims settlement on behalf of its agents.

Warehouse Handling

The Warehouse Handling charge applies when a customer uses Storage-In-Transit (SIT) service, and it compensates the moving company for handling the customer’s items in the warehouse -- from storing them to removing them.

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