

Smooth Move

Guard your residents against moving debacles!

Moving is stressful enough – uprooting all of your life, changing your address, the work of it all. But lately, it has become even harder due to the unscrupulous business practices of some moving companies using the Internet and yellow pages. National news magazine shows like Dateline NBC have even highlighted this issue, which has led to raids on some moving companies based in south Florida and Texas. Why should we be concerned? If a move to your community is a nightmare and totally upsetting to your new resident, they will forever link the two events in their mind. No matter that we performed our jobs flawlessly and were attentive, they will always have that subconscious link. Providing your new residents with some easy tips will help insure that their move to your community goes as seamlessly as possible.

Getting a Price Quote

You can find companies who will give you price quotes online all over the Internet. While this may be a good way of comparing prices and finding out a bit more about the company, I suggest doing a lot more research before you reserve a company or give them a credit card deposit. It is good to start with companies that are members of the American Moving and Storage Association. For a list of member movers in your area, suggest they visit the associations' excellent website, www.moving.org, to look up the mover and uncover any past problems. The movers belonging to the association must abide by a certain code of conduct and abide by strict rules to insure quality and customer satisfaction. They also agree to binding arbitration should something occur. Once you have your list of movers, do some additional research to weed through the list. Look at the Better Business Bureau homepage for the city that the moving company is based in, as well as the city you are moving from and too, to see if any complaints have been filed against the company and if so, how they were resolved. You can also check

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with the state and national Department of Transportation who keep a record of companies with violations against them. Now you should have a smaller list and can start calling the companies directly. Keep in mind that you are the customer and that this is kind of like buying a car – you need to remain in control to avoid being taken advantage of. Be sure and ask them some questions – can they provide a list of recent references? How do they charge, by room, cubic feet or by the hour? Are their additional charges for things such as flights of stairs? If so, what constitutes a “flight”? Some moving companies may consider a flight of stairs to be seven stairs or even less, this is only half the stairs it takes to reach a typical floor. Another charge may be for “long carries”. If the truck is further than 50 or 75 feet from the door to your apartment, this can sometimes incur an additional fee. Pricing may also be higher on the weekends or during peak moving times. It is also a very good idea, once you have decided on a mover, to request a copy of each page that you will be asked to sign on your move date to be sent to you by mail or fax. Let them know that you won’t sign anything the day of the move that you didn’t receive prior. If they refuse to do this or drag their feet, cancel your reservation – this is a huge red flag. When you receive the pages, you will be able to read through each carefully, and you can call and ask questions when you are not hurried as you would be on your moving day. Often times, the foreman that arrives at your door will not be able to negotiate pricing or options with you, it is best to get this all out of the way before they even arrive.

Regarding the quotes, make sure you read through these very carefully. Especially if you have received a quote based on cubic feet, be sure that you have overstated the size of your shipment. For instance, if you have a two bedroom apartment with an average amount of furniture and belongings, you may be quoted anywhere from 600 to 1200 cubic feet. The catch is that if your shipment ends up being more than the quoted cubic feet, you could be charged double your estimate price for each additional cubic foot. It is best to fill out a detailed inventory, and to overestimate the size of your shipment as much as possible – even have a few imaginary pieces of furniture to pad the size. The

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moving company will typically refund you money if your shipment is less cubic feet than the estimate, but if it is more you will likely owe considerably more than you had planned. It is best to avoid quotes based on cubic feet all together. However, you should also be leery of quotes based on per hour charges. This can easily get out of hand as well, as the moving company has no incentive to hurry if they are paid by the hour.

On the day of the move

You should already have seen all of the paperwork that the foreman will ask you to sign. If there is anything that has been changed, amended, added or subtracted – this is a very bad sign. It would be advisable to ask the foreman to wait outside, halt work, and for you to call the person who booked your move to work these details out. If you are unsure of something or are not comfortable, do not let the movers begin work! Do not assume you can work it out at the end or upon arriving at your new location. This is what many of the unscrupulous firms are counting on, but when they have your stuff there isn't much need for them to negotiate – they have you over a barrel. Be sure that all coupons, advance deposits and discounts are written out and reflected on the Bill of Lading. Do not sign anything on the Bill of Lading until all of your items are loaded.

It is a very good idea to insist on a complete inventory of your belongings. This may take a little bit longer, but it is one of the only ways you can be assured that what you have will make it to your new home safely. Also note that most moving companies will not insure anything for damages if they did not pack the box themselves. Unfortunately, this often means that boxes they didn't pack are not treated with equal care. It is usually in your best interests to watch the truck being loaded and your home being emptied as closely as possible, or consider taking advantage of the moving company's packing services. Another tip, pack your important keepsakes and valuables yourself and transport them yourself – you know how they are being treated.

Self Movers

Creating an alliance with a local truck rental company is a pure win-win situation for the company and your new residents. Many of the local moving companies like U-Haul, Ryder Truck Rental, Hertz-Penske and National Car Rental would be happy to work with your community and offer a 10% or greater discount for clients you refer. This can be especially helpful if it is in a convenient or close location to your property. Many times people reserving a truck don't know the new part of town or city they are moving to and may just look in the phone book for a name they know. This can make picking up and returning the truck more of a hassle than is necessary. The last thing someone wants to do is have a \$50 cab ride to take them back to their new apartment when they return a rental truck.

Other services

These days, a lot of the other hassles of moving can be taken care of with a few phone calls or a couple mouse clicks. One excellent resource for your new residents is www.connectutilities.com. This is a free service that arranges for all of your new utilities in your next home for you – with just one website visit! Cable and telephone, gas and electricity and any other necessary services can be arranged for you. Think of the time and hassle saved! Another great resource is www.onecall.com. This service can transfer all of your magazine subscriptions for you, automatically. Most other bills and services you deal with can be changed online with ease.

If you are moving a long distance or to another state, be sure to remember things like drug prescriptions, medical records and eye and dental records. This will save you a lot of hassle when you get a new doctor. There are also plenty of online services to help you choose new doctors such as www.webmd.com or

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www.1800dentist.com, or the website for your insurance carrier. Most larger pharmacies are now interconnected and they can look-up your old prescriptions and transfer them to a new pharmacy in just seconds.

What the community can do to help

The last thing someone wants to do on their moving day is sit in a leasing office and go over paper work. With a rented truck in your drive, the new resident's car filled with pets and clothes, and their sweaty hands all over your leasing desk, why would you want them there anyway? Lease signing appointments are really the best ways to get this out of the way prior to the move-in day and save the time and hassle. This way, the day of the move they walk in, get their keys and walk back out.

Moving will never be a truly hassle-free experience, but a community that makes a smooth move one of their goals for each new resident will likely have better retention and happier residents!



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Word Count: 1586 + Bio

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