



Before Hiring a Mover

Illegal moving companies are fly-by-night operations and take advantage of customers, holding goods hostage for money, or inflating cost estimates. Confirm the company has a state permit. Visit www.utc.wa.gov/consumers/movers or call 1-888-333-9882.

A moving company operating within Washington without a valid permit from the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) is violating state law. Movers with UTC permits must comply with safety, insurance, and customer service standards. Movers must perform services at reasonable rates and within a reasonable time. They are also required to background check and drug test their employees. Movers without a state permit operate outside the law and may provide little—if any—protection for loss or damage to your belongings.

Do Your Homework

First contact the UTC about the company's permit status and consumer complaint history.



UTC
Washington Utilities
and Transportation
Commission

Consumer Protection
360-664-1222
consumer@utc.wa.gov

PO Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7250
www.utc.wa.gov

Compare Costs

The UTC approves the minimum and maximum rates a mover can charge for moving services. You may get a copy of these rates, called a tariff, from your mover or the UTC. Moving costs are calculated using one of two methods.

- Moves up to and including 55 miles: Rates are based on the number of workers used; the amount of time it takes to load, move, and unload your goods; and an hourly service rate.
- Moves 56 miles and up: Rates are based on the weight of your goods and hauling distance.

Before Hiring a Mover...

Get a Written Estimate

Movers are required to provide a free written estimate of the cost of your move. Verbal estimates are not allowed. The estimate should clearly and accurately describe all charges and services.

Types of estimates

- A non-binding estimate is an educated guess of what your move would cost, based on the mover's survey of your belongings. Your final cost can be more than your non-binding estimate, though it **cannot** be more than 25% higher than your estimate or supplemental estimates.
- A written binding estimate guarantees a price based on items to be moved and services needed.

Regardless of which type of estimate you get, you are best served by an accurate one. Show or provide the estimator with information about every single item to be moved, including items in attics, basements, sheds, and under beds. Reach a clear understanding about the amount of packing and services needed.

Inventory

Movers are required by law to make an inventory list of your property. Make sure that it is legible and accurate. If you disagree with the inventory, note it on the list **before you sign**. Make sure all notations also appear on the mover's copy. Without an inventory, you could have difficulty proving a loss or damage claim. Anything omitted from the estimate but later included in your move will add to the cost. If circumstances change from the time of the estimate resulting in additional costs, the mover must provide a supplemental estimate and have you sign it before performing the additional services.

Bill of Lading

This is your contract with the mover. It states the mover's responsibilities, such as the services they will perform, when and how they charge for the move, and the liability they will assume. Be sure you understand this contract, especially the part about the mover's liability for loss of damage, and get a copy. Movers are required by law to issue you a bill of lading, so do not hire a mover who does not want to use one. You must sign the bill of lading before the truck leaves with your belongings and sign it again as a receipt upon delivery. The driver should also sign the bill of lading as a receipt that your belongings were picked up. Keep a copy of the bill of lading ready until your belongings are delivered and unpacked.

Loss and Damage Options

Movers must assume some level of liability for loss or damage to your belongings during your move. Your mover's liability will likely be less than the value of your goods; the mover is not liable for the full value of your property unless you pay an additional charge for that protection. Movers must explain their liability for loss or damage to your property, and how to increase your protection. **Do not hire a mover who refuses to offer liability protection or discuss coverage options for your belongings.**

Having Problems with Your Mover? Call the Commission.

Commission staff are always ready to answer questions about moving companies and your consumer rights. We can help you with problems regarding services and rates. Please try to resolve your complaint directly with the company first. If you feel you have given the company adequate time to correct the problem and you are still not satisfied, call the commission at 1-888-333-WUTC, or email consumer@utc.wa.gov. You can also file online www.utc.wa.gov/fileacomplaint.