



UNDERSTANDING PUC REGULATION OF HOUSEHOLD GOODS MOVERS

Have you had a bad experience with a moving company? Do you wonder if a specific household goods mover is registered with the Public Utilities Commission (PUC)? Would you like to know what to do to prevent moving headaches? This information will provide you with a better understanding of household goods regulation in Colorado and what consumers can do to prevent a bad moving experience.

BASIC INFORMATION

Colorado law gives the PUC authority over household goods movers operating within Colorado. The Household Goods Movers law and rules adopted by the PUC establish annual insurance and application requirements, and establish minimum service standards for contracts between movers and their customers. Below are the major provisions of the law:

- Movers must provide written documentation to the customer prior to the move, listing the services to be provided and the costs for those services. Rates are not regulated by the PUC, but must be specified in the document.
- Movers must also provide the customer with a written “consumer advisement” prior to commencing the move or any ancillary services that generally outlines the consumer’s rights under the move.
- Movers may not withhold delivery of goods if the customer pays the fee as specified in the shipping document.
- Movers must accept at least two of the following forms of payment: (1) cash; (2) cashier’s check, money order or traveler’s checks; (3) personal check; or (4) credit card.
- Prescription medication, medical supplies and children’s goods may not be withheld from customers under any circumstances.
- Movers are required to tell customers where their goods are being stored in the event of a fee dispute.
- Movers must carry adequate levels of motor vehicle, cargo and general liability insurance and register annually with the PUC.
- All advertising for household goods movers must include the mover’s name, address and PUC registration number.

To reach PUC Consumer Affairs:

1560 Broadway, Suite 250, Denver, CO 80202
303-894-2070 (local); 1-800-456-0858 (toll-free)
dora_puc_complaints@state.co.us

CONSUMER TIPS TO PREVENT MOVING HEADACHES

Consumers should follow these suggestions to avoid moving-day problems:

- Find a reputable moving company. Ask your neighbors, friends, co-workers or relatives for recommendations about which mover to use. Call the Better Business Bureau to see if they have information about the company.
- Plan your move well ahead of time, 2-6 weeks if possible.
- Obtain written estimates from several movers and compare costs and all other services to be provided by the mover. Be suspicious of estimates that are significantly lower than the rest. Ask the mover to explain all service costs to you so that you understand them.
- Beware of estimates made over the phone. Most movers will need to see your goods in order to make an accurate estimate of moving costs.
- Know which company is actually providing the move. Some companies that advertise moving services are simply brokers that do not move goods. Obtain information about how to contact the mover before, during and after the move.
- Find out what the mover's responsibilities are for damages that may occur to your belongings. If your goods are to be stored with the mover, be aware that goods stored in a moving trailer instead of a warehouse could be subject to weather-related damage.
- Do not sign blank or incomplete documents or allow anyone representing you to do so. Make sure you get everything in writing, including signed estimates. Customers should also make sure that all service costs are included in the written estimate and explained to them.
- Be present when movers arrive at your house and stay until they are finished.
- If at all possible, make sure your new residence is available for occupancy prior to the commencement of the initial move. Direct movements historically result in fewer problems on the other end. Be there to obtain your goods and have the agreed-upon amount and method of payment ready.

FILING A COMPLAINT OR VERIFYING PERMITS

The Household Goods Movers law applies only to intrastate moves – those that move items from point-to-point within Colorado. To learn more about a Colorado intrastate household goods mover or to file a complaint, call the PUC Consumer Affairs office at 303-894-2070 (Denver metro area) or 1-800-456-0858 (outside the Denver metro area). Complaints may also be filed via the PUC website (www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/puc) by clicking on the File a Complaint link under the Consumers' column.

In addition to calling the PUC at the above numbers to file a complaint, consumers may also call and verify that the household goods moving company has an active permit and the appropriate insurance. Consumers may also verify a company's permit via the PUC website (www.colorado.gov/pacific/dora/puc) by clicking on the Transportation box.

- Movers who violate PUC rules are subject to civil penalties ranging from \$550 to \$11,000 per day, depending on the violation.
- For complaints about interstate moves, customers should call the federal household goods hotline at 1-888-368-7238 or visit <http://nccdb.fmcsa.dot.gov/HomePage.asp>.
- In the event of a dispute between the customer and the mover regarding charges or damage, the mover must offer the shipper the opportunity to participate in binding arbitration.