

A consumers guide to choosing a mover:

Eight moving traps and how you can avoid them

We have hundreds of consumer complaints in our records – and we get more every day.

The Canadian Association of Movers (CAM) hasn't heard every type of complaint but we think we've heard most of them. Some innovative movers are finding new ways to annoy (and trap) the consumer. There are a few common traps that result in unhappy moving experiences.

They're easy to spot but you have to be aware and always stick to the four basic principles of choosing a mover.

FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES:

1. Find a reputable mover through the Better Business Bureau (BBB), the provincial government's consumer protection agency and/or CAM.

2. Ask at least three movers for estimates.

3. Get the terms and conditions of your move in writing.

4. Make sure you have adequate insurance protection for your goods.

TRAPS:

Trap #1 – I only have a cell phone:

All movers use cell phones to help in their customer communications. But some movers only operate with a cell phone. Contacting this mover if you have problems, before, during or after your move, can be very difficult if he simply decides to avoid your calls. Also, going out of business or ignoring you is as simple as turning off the cell phone.

Trap #2 – No, we won't give you our street address:

Some movers do not advertise their street address. Ask for the mover's street address. If they won't give it to you, there's usually a good reason. They may not have one – that is, they operate without a storefront, usually with only a cell phone, which brings us back to trap #1. Or they don't want their office locations advertised, so



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that unhappy customers cannot locate them or file their complaints with the mover face-to-face. It's often a good idea to visit a mover's office before booking your move, to ensure they, and possibly your goods, can be found.

Trap #3 – The mover works from home:

Many entrepreneurs today work from home offices, but in the household goods moving business, this can be problematic. This trap is tied to trap #2 where the mover's trucks and storage space are at some unknown location. Finding your goods once they've been loaded onto a truck or are in transit or storage may be difficult.

Trap #4 – Ad size:

In advertising, size matters. The bigger the ad, the more likely you are to call the advertised company. Does ad size indicate that the company is ethical and will provide you with professional service? Do the logos in the ad validate the company's performance? These do not guarantee the mover's reputation or likelihood to deliver promised services.

Trap #5 – Alphabetic names:

Position is very important in advertising. A name beginning "AAA" is designed to get the advertiser's name to the front of

the listings in the telephone directory or Yellow Pages. The closer the mover is to the front of the listing, the more likely a consumer is to call them. See trap #4.

Trap #6 – Freebies and references:

Watch out for free services, like the free estimate. An estimate is usually not a chargeable service in the moving business. Costs for free services, like free boxes, will often be included in the moving rate. References offered by a mover will likely only be from satisfied customers and hardly telling of the mover's day-to-day business practices and customer satisfaction.

Trap #7 – Want-Ads:

Your local newspaper contains want-ads offering moving services. These services are generally rendered by someone with an idle truck who may not

be a professional in the moving industry, who may not have insurance protection for your goods if they are lost or damaged, or workers compensation protection for the workers if they are injured in your home. (Why? Because, if the mover does not have workers' compensation, you are liable.) The truck, the owner and the workers may be difficult to locate once your goods are loaded. The risks are considerable. This applies to the ads

you'll see on the corner telephone pole and the grocer's bulletin board as well.

Trap #8 – For Sale Sign:

The 'for sale' sign in your front yard acts like a beacon attracting moving companies. The sign signifies people-on-the-move and movers will begin calling you to offer their moving and storage services. Maintain control of your moving decisions – seek out professional movers, get estimates from three different companies, check the movers' reputations, ask questions, don't give in to pressure.

These are eight tell-tale signs to help consumers in choosing a reputable mover who will provide a safe and professional moving service for their household effects. Look for more tips in future articles. A listing of reputable movers and other useful information may be viewed on CAM's web site, www.mover.net.

