

A CONSUMERS GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MOVER:

Six more moving traps and how to avoid them

Don't be fooled by flashy advertising, do your research before you move



There are several common traps that consumers fall into when choosing a mover that results in unhappy moving experiences. In our last article, we reviewed eight traps that commonly ensnare consumers as they search for and select a moving company. Here are a few more traps that are easy to spot, but a consumer needs to be alert and should always stick to the four basic principles of choosing a mover. Remember – it is your responsibility to protect yourself against an unscrupulous mover.

FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES:

- 1. Find a reputable mover.** Contact the following to get useful information about a prospective mover:
 - The Better Business Bureau at 1-800-459-8875 (toll free),
 - Ontario's consumer protection agency, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, at 416-326-8800, and/or
 - The Canadian Association of Movers (CAM) at 905-848-6579 or 1-866-860-0065 (toll free), or visit www.mover.net.
- 2. Ask at least three movers** for estimates.
- 3. Make sure you have adequate insurance protection** for your goods.
- 4. Get the terms and conditions of your move in writing.**

TRAPS:

Trap #9 – We'll forget the GST:

A legitimate business will apply the proper taxes to your service contract. How likely is the mover that offers to forego



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collecting the Goods and Services Tax for Revenue Canada to treat you with fairness and honesty? These transactions are often cash only, to avoid a paper trail. It is often impossible to hold movers to their promises if your contract with them is verbal. The mover may not take responsibility for losses or damage.

Trap #10 Voice mail broadcast:

One of today's marketing tools is the use of the voice mail system. Businesses will often broadcast a voice mail message that offers their services to local homeowners' telephones. This is the shotgun effect, where a blast will bring a few good business leads and potential customers. You have no way of knowing the reputation or performance history of such a business without doing your homework – ask questions, check the mover's reputation, get information in writing.

Or simply avoid the mover who uses such a hands-off business practice.

Trap #11 – Rates that are too good to be true:

Estimates of your moving cost from reputable companies, given the same information, are likely to be fairly close. The mover who gives you an estimate that is much lower than the others may be offering sub-standard services. Often the mover makes up the lower cost with additional charges once your goods are loaded on his truck and on their way. Our experience shows that low rates are one of the best indicators of a bad move to come – damage to your goods, hidden charges and moves gone wrong. Beware of this very serious, and often most costly, consumer trap.

Trap #12 – Friends and relatives recommendations:

While the moving experiences of your friends and relatives can provide useful information about a mover, even a very bad mover can occasionally do a good job. Again, get estimates from at least two other movers and

check with agencies that have useful information about the mover, like the BBB, the provincial consumer protection agency and CAM.

Trap #13 – Lots of logos:

Moving company advertising often contains logos that appeal to the eye and suggest credible services. Logos of van lines, the BBB and CAM suggest quality service, fair practices and security for goods. However, consumers should verify that the mover is in fact affiliated with the organization whose logo is being used. The advertising may be out-of-date or, worse, completely false.

Trap #14 – We're fully insured:

All too often, CAM has heard unhappy consumers say their mover told them they had cargo insurance, but when their claim for loss and/or damage was filed, there was no insurance. Ask to see the mover's cargo insurance. Check your household insurance policy for coverage during your move. Ask the mover about Replacement Valuation Protection in case you have to replace your goods because of loss or damage. Without any of this protection, your mover may be liable only up to 60¢ per pound of any article lost or damaged.

These are six more tips to help you choose a reputable mover who will provide you with a safe and professional moving service, and to avoid movers who can make your moving experience a nightmare. A listing of reputable movers and other useful information may be viewed on CAM's web site, www.mover.net.