



Over 700 complaints about movers and storage companies trigger consumer warning



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April 30, 2019- (Location) - Moving is more than relocating your belongings to a new home. It requires time, patience, money and trust. With more than 700 complaints filed with BBB and the Canadian Association of Movers (CAM) collectively in 2018 about movers and storage related companies, BBB says choosing a mover is a heavy decision not to be taken lightly.

Mary O'Sullivan-Andersen, president and CEO of BBB Serving Southern Alberta and East Kootenay, says with recent news stories about unscrupulous movers taking advantage of consumers, legitimate companies can sometimes be put in the same box.

"Unfortunately, fly-by-night and no-name "truck-for-hire" types can take advantage of the fact that consumers are under emotional, financial and time pressures when moving. By working together with the Canadian Association of Movers to help organizations set standards for ethical business practices, we can connect consumers with trustworthy businesses," says O'Sullivan-Andersen.

Nancy Irvine, president of the Canadian Association of Movers, says the key to a smooth move is research. "We strongly urge consumers to do their due diligence before hiring a mover, as they would before purchasing any other major service. It's not like buying a pair of shoes. You are entrusting your entire lifelong belongings to someone you likely don't know. There are many factors to look at - not just price. Remember that the cheapest price might turn into the costliest move," says Irvine.

So, what could possibly go wrong?

- Missed delivery or pick-up dates
- Lost or damaged belongings
- Charges that exceed estimates provided
- Claim disputes for lost or damaged items

BBB encourages movers to be mindful of these moving misfortunes:

- **Fly-by-night movers:** Movers show up in an unmarked rental truck rather than a clearly marked company-owned fleet truck and take off with your possessions. Only when you have arrived at your new residence do you discover your things didn't make the journey with you. Most professional movers wear uniforms, undergo background checks and will provide an order number for tracking purposes.
- **Holding your belongings hostage:** The move seems to be going smoothly, until you arrive at your new home and the movers demand more money before releasing your things from storage.
- **Conniving Contractors:** Movers who try and gain the trust of clients and persuade them that there is no need for a written contract. If something goes wrong during the move, the contractor denies all responsibility, leaving you on the hook for costs and damages. Or, the contractor demands more money, claiming the higher price was verbally agreed to before moving.

When searching for the right mover, BBB and CAM offer these tips that won't leave you in a fragile state of mind:

- **Check out the company's rating with BBB and standing with CAM.** BBB and CAM provide trustworthy and relevant information about moving companies and contractors. Check out a company's rating with BBB, complaint history, verified customer reviews and other important information. Check with CAM for a detailed consumer checklist for hiring a qualified mover.
- **Ask the mover about replacement valuation protection.** Replacement Valuation Protection is the total value of a shipment agreed upon based on the weight of your goods. Most often, valuation is an additional cost but a necessary one. Check with your homeowners insurance to determine what coverage is required and ensure that any high value items are disclosed in advance so that extra precautions can be taken.
- **Get it in writing.** Get three written estimates from different movers based on visits to your home. Though most professional movers do give quotes over the phone nowadays, it's a good idea to still get written documentation of all the services you are receiving. If an estimate seems too good to be true, it likely is. If at any point the services change, whether on your part or the part of the professional, ensure that these changes are documented and understood by both parties.
- **Talk about the money.** Find out how and when payment is required. Many companies require up to a 10% deposit to secure your moving date and require payment on delivery before your belongings are delivered. Find out what your payment options are and what method of payment is available. Let your bank know that you are in the process of relocating in the event they notice increased or unusual charges on your credit card.
- **Assess and Inspect.** Assess your current and new residence for any accessibility challenges and discuss with your mover to determine if accessibility will be an issue. Many times, a residence cannot be accessed by a large tractor trailer. If the mover cannot access your residence or your new location, there may be additional charges for the use of a smaller truck that can get to your home (shuttle). Also be sure to provide the mover with details of the new space you are moving into to ensure the movers can easily access it and properly place your belongings.
- **Prepare for damage.** Even though trustworthy movers are trained to handle your belongings and your home with care, it is difficult to move an entire household without at least some damage. Be sure to inquire about inadmissible and non-protected items, such as hazardous materials. It's best to take valuables such as and jewelry and currency with you. Make sure your expectations are realistic and plan accordingly. Determine what is covered under your homeowner's insurance policy and what is/is not covered under your replacement valuation protection. If you are arranging for other trades to be in and out of your home, consider documenting on condition report before and after access in the event any property damage takes place.
- **Watch for red flags.** If a mover doesn't provide replacement valuation protection details, a company address, proof of worker's compensation or a GST/HST number, keep looking for a mover. If you are getting a "funny feeling" about your mover, cancel the move and find a new mover. Always make sure that any time the services change, get it in writing.

- **File a complaint:** If you do run into trouble with your mover, file a complaint with BBB. Not only can BBB help facilitate a resolution, but your complaint could also help future consumers looking for a mover.

Moving is stressful. Make moving easier by checking with the BBB and the Canadian Association of Movers to see if a mover holds good standing reputations with professional organizations.

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About BBB: For more than 100 years, Better Business Bureau has been helping people find trustworthy businesses and charities. BBB is a nonprofit, business-supported organization that sets and upholds high standards for fair and honest business behavior. Visit bbb.org for more information.

About CAM: Canadian Association of Movers (CAM), Canada's moving industry trade association, is working hard to ensure that consumers receive quality, professional services, by setting ethical standards, using trained staff and equipment, and being attentive to consumer needs and existing legislation. CAM is identifying rogue movers that are cheating and abusing Canadian consumers and helping consumers find trusted, reputable movers.

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