

Good Practice Guidelines for Canadian Movers

The *Good Practice Guidelines for Canadian Movers* and the associated *Consumer Checklist for Choosing a Moving Company* were prepared by a multi-stakeholder working group consisting of government, business, and consumer group representatives, under the leadership of the Office of Consumer Affairs, Industry Canada (for a listing of working group participants, see below). The *Good Practice Guidelines for Canadian Movers* and the *Consumer Checklist* were developed to act as a complement to legal protections already in place. It is hoped that the existence of the guidelines and the checklist will assist movers in identifying and adhering to high standards and will aid consumers in selecting reputable, ethical and professional movers. The guidelines can also be used as part of moving industry certification programs.

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Introduction

The level of consumer complaints about movers has concerned all stakeholders in the Canadian moving and storage industry: reputable movers, consumer associations, trade associations and government. To address these concerns and to act as a complement to legal protections already in place, the Office of Consumer Affairs, Industry Canada formed a multi-stakeholder working group of moving-industry professionals, consumer group representatives and government officials to develop good practice guidelines for reputable movers, and an associated consumer checklist. It is hoped that the existence of the *Good Practice Guidelines for Canadian Movers* and the *Consumer Checklist* will assist movers in identifying and adhering to high standards and aid consumers in selecting reputable, ethical and professional movers. The *Good Practice Guidelines for Canadian Movers* could also be used as part of moving industry certification programs.

Good Practice Guidelines for Canadian Movers

Canadian movers wishing to ensure continued good relations with their customers agree to:

- Provide customers with a pamphlet which outlines customer and mover rights and responsibilities, mover liability for loss or damage, optional programs available, limitations on liability and additional costs associated with each level of liability. The pamphlet should be written in plain language and be easy to understand. Where local move customers request an estimate by telephone, movers shall agree to offer to provide the pamphlet by mail, fax, or email.
- Provide written estimates of costs that describe the shipment and the cost of all services requested by the customer. The estimate shall be on company letterhead, stating the name, telephone number and address of the company, a full estimate of the number of boxes to be moved, the size and value of items, the cost per hour or flat rate, terms of payment, and timing of services to be provided. The estimate should be signed by both the company representative and the customer.
- Abide by the terms of the estimate as provided to the customer, in compliance with all applicable law.
- For long distance moves, tag all goods and prepare, prior to the shipment leaving the residence, a descriptive inventory of the goods to be moved that shall be presented for signature to the customer or his authorized representative who is present at origin for loading and again at destination as the goods are unloaded. A copy of this descriptive inventory shall be provided to the customer prior to shipment. Any existing damage to goods should be noted in the inventory.
- Provide customers with a bill of lading at the time of pickup which clearly delineates critical customer service details such as the terms and amount of payment and the date of delivery.
- When charges are based on weight, determine the weight of each shipment by the use of a certified scale at origin and if requested, furnish evidence of that weight to the customer. When the actual weight exceeds the estimated weight by more than 10%, the mover upon request will perform a "re-weigh" of the shipment and furnish evidence of the re-weigh to the customer.
- Make reasonable efforts to fulfill the arrangements made for servicing a shipment, including the performance of pickup and delivery as agreed upon. Keep customers advised of any service delays and provide them with information as to when service may be expected to be performed. This should include providing the customer with the company contact name and telephone number.
- Ensure the customer receives a copy of the bill of lading or invoice on delivery, with a clear description of charges and services provided.
- Acknowledge, in writing, within 30 days of the receipt of a written loss or damage claim or delay claim, to hereafter pay, decline, make a firm compromise offer or advise the claimant of the status of the claim and any reason for a delay in making a final disposition within 120 days of receipt of any documented claim for loss or damage, or for any documented claim for delay in delivery beyond the dates shown on the bill of lading, when the claim is filed by the customer within 60 days (long distance moves) or 30 days (local moves) after delivery.
- Promptly and fairly attempt to resolve disputes concerning loss or damage claims to household goods, through in-house complaints-handling and external dispute-resolution processes as appropriate and available. In terms of guidance on what constitutes a fair dispute resolution process, movers should draw on the federal-provincial-territorial "Consumer Complaints Management: A Guide for Canadian Business," available at: <http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/pics/ca/consumercomplaints.pdf>
- Communicate with the public through fair and accurate advertisements, estimates and sales literature regarding the services that may be performed.
- If working in conjunction with other agents, ensure that these agents also comply with the above commitments.
- Maintain and clean facilities and equipment regularly in accordance with good industry practices.