

How to Find a Reputable Moving Company

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Moving is a very stressful and expensive experience, and if you don't take precautions it can quickly turn into a nightmare. So how do you find a moving company that you can trust with everything that you own and feel safe in your decision? While we always recommend moving yourself if possible, or using a you-pack/we-drive service like [ABF U-Pack Moving®](#) or [Broadway Express](#), we know that sometimes circumstances don't allow that to work out. If that's the situation that you're in, here is some helpful advice to get you on the right track.

The first thing that you should do is put down your keyboard and step away from your computer. While there are some reputable moving companies that have web sites, nearly all of the victims that contact us found their moving company on the Internet.

Your next step is to pick up your phone book, or call your local real estate agents and find at least three moving companies that have offices *in your area*. Try to find moving companies that have been in business at least ten years, and *do not* hire a moving broker. Current consumer protection laws related to the movement of household goods only apply to Motor Carriers and not to Household Goods Brokers.

Set up appointments for them to come to your house and do an in-home estimate in the order of your least favorite to your most favorite company. If they won't come to your house to do an in-home estimate, hang up and find another company. Find out up front if the company will be doing the move themselves, or if they will be sub-contracting out the job. If they won't be moving you, then move on. You should also visit their office and make sure that the company is who they say they are. Check out their trucks and storage facility. Make sure that their trucks are permanently marked with the company's name.

As each moving company gives you an estimate based on what they see in your home, leave the paperwork out where the next moving company can easily see it. Ask questions about the difference in pricing since it may have to do with what services one company provides that another doesn't, the amount of insurance included, or [valuation](#) of your belongings. Never hire a mover who gives you a quote based on cubic feet. Never, ever sign blank paperwork, and *know* what you're signing. Read the document, understand it and don't worry about making the moving company wait.

You should know that every moving company is required by law to provide you with a "[Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move](#)" booklet. If they don't provide you with this, send them packing (so to speak).

Also, while you have the sales rep's attention, get as much information about the company that you can such as:

- Full company name and any DBA names (doing business as)
- How long they have been in business
- Company address
- Phone numbers (local and toll-free)
- DOT and MC license numbers
- Company web site address
- Email addresses
- Get references (and call them)

Now that you have your three estimates, it's time to get back online. This is where the Internet is a powerful tool for the consumer, and where all of that information that you gathered pays off.

Many states make it easy to search for corporate information online. We've made it easy to find each state's corporation search. Just [select the state on our Links page](#) that your moving company is based. If you can't search online, then call your secretary of state's office and ask for the articles of incorporation. You can use the Articles of Incorporation that you find to verify how long your moving company has been in business, as well as the company's address and owner's name.

Remember those DOT and MC license numbers that you wrote down? Well, it's time to make sure that your moving company not only has the license authority to perform your move, but if they have the insurance to make it legal! Let's start with [SaferSys.org](#).

SaferSys is the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) web site to search for motor carrier license information. First click on Company Snapshot in the center of the page. In the center of the next web page, you'll see a search area. Put in your company's DOT license number, and click 'Search'. If the DOT number that they gave you is accurate (which it better be or it's time to move on again) you'll be presented with a screen with lots of information. Here are some key elements to the SaferSys report:

- The company name, address, and phone numbers should match what the company gave you.
- On the top right of the form, there is a field titled 'Out of Service'. This *must* read 'No' and the 'Out of Service Date' field should read 'None'.
- The two fields labeled 'Power Units', and 'Drivers'. This should give you a good indication of the size of the company. Here's a thought... if your company told you that they do a hundred moves a month but they only have two trucks, how likely do you think that is?
- Another field labeled 'MCS-150 Form Date' may contain the date that the license was applied for.
- Next, under Operation Classification, there should be an X next to 'Auth for Hire'.
- Under Carrier Operation, if you are moving out of state there should be an X next to 'Interstate'.
- Under Cargo Carried, there should be at least an X next to Household Goods.
- You should also check their inspection record. This lists their inspection record as well as the national average. If your company's average is much higher than the national average, or if they have been in business for three years, but don't have any inspections, then something is wrong.

Everything okay there? Good! Let's check their insurance. At the bottom of the SaferSys report there is a link titled 'FMCSA Licensing & Insurance site'. Click on it.

This should bring you to a screen that gives you two options to view the company's insurance details. Let's go the easier route and click on the button labeled 'Screen'. Again, you'll be presented with the moving company's name, address, and legal name. There is also some very valuable information below:

- Under the column 'Authority Type' there are three listings: Common, Contract, and Broker. The column to the right with the header 'Authority Status' tells you if their authority is active. Your mover needs to have at the very least 'Common' listed as active. If either 'Application Pending' or 'Revocation Pending' doesn't say 'NO' for common authority, then something is wrong.
- The last table lists the insurance required, and the insurance on file for your mover. A moving company is required to have both BIPD (\$750,000 minimum), and Cargo insurance filed with the FMCSA. Under the heading 'Insurance on File' if BIPD says \$0, or if Cargo says 'NO' then run, don't walk away from this company.

The good news is that the hardest part is over with. Is your company still doing okay? If so, we're on the right track. You should make a quick check with the [Better Business Bureau](#). Now, let me make a point here. The BBB is a business with members that pay them dues. Now, if you were running a business and belonged to an

organization that bad mouthed your business practices, do you think that you'd keep paying them dues? Do you think that the BBB wants to lose members by bad mouthing them? Nope, and nope are probably your answers, and you're right. Use the BBB reports as a guide. Call up the BBB office and ask them about the number of complaints that your company has on file. Don't take a 'satisfactory' rating at face value.

One last check you should do is to call the FMCSA's Safety Violation and Consumer Complaints hotline at 1-888-368-7238 and ask them about the complaint history of your moving company. They are open from 10am to 6pm EST Monday thru Friday and it's worth the call.

Post a message on the MovingScam.com message boards and ask if anyone else has had any experience with the company. The message boards are very active, and chances are that someone will respond quickly to your questions. Also feel free to [contact](mailto:contact@MovingScam.com) MovingScam.com with any questions you may have. We're here to help.

Finally, if anyone other than the moving company that you hired shows up on moving day, fire them on the spot. This is worth repeating... never, ever sign blank paperwork, and *know* what you're signing. Read the document, understand it and don't worry about making the mover wait.

For an alphabetized state-by-state list of moving companies that have been discussed on MovingScam.com along with reviews and comments, [click on this link](#).