

Moving Within Massachusetts

If you are moving household goods from your home to another location within Massachusetts, your mover must be licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Energy. The DTE helps you by setting certain licensing and insurance requirements which movers must meet and by investigating complaints when problems arise.

If you move household goods from one state to another, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has jurisdiction over the mover, and you should direct any questions to that agency. You can contact the FMCSA at 888-368-7238.

No matter where you are moving or whether the move is large or small, you should take the time to carefully plan your relocation. This pamphlet will help you begin the process of moving within Massachusetts.

How Can I Select A Reputable Mover?

A personal recommendation is the best way to start. Whether you use a company recommended by friends or choose a company through its advertising, be sure that any company you contact has an up-to-date Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Energy operating certificate number.

This is important because, in order to obtain authority to operate in Massachusetts, moving companies must be licensed by the DTE. They are subject to State laws and the Department's rules and regulations, designed to protect the consumer. For example, movers licensed by the DTE are required to carry a minimum amount of cargo insurance. However, your ability to recover for loss or damage is dependent upon your agreement with the mover. All movers are also required to file a Tariff containing the rates charged for various moving services. The Tariff is filed with the DTE and is available to the public.

How Important Is Obtaining An Estimate?

A written estimate is one of your best safeguards against overcharges and other unpleasant surprises.

To obtain a reasonably accurate estimate, you must show the estimator everything you intend to ship. An estimate is not a bid or a contract, and choosing the mover submitting the lowest estimate will not assure you of the lowest cost move. Regardless of any estimate provided, the final amount you must pay for your move is determined by the hourly rate or actual weight of your household goods, the amount of packing completed and any other additional services performed by the mover.

Be sure to ask about all additional costs when you are given an estimate for your move. For example, moves based on hourly rates will be assessed a travel time charge in addition to the actual time it takes to complete your move. Travel time charges are calculated on the distance between the original point of loading and final point of unloading. Mileage is determined in accordance with approved mileage guides or vehicle odometer readings. For moves based on the weight of the shipment, the mover will not charge additionally for travel time.

Rates

Moving companies must file their rates with the DTE and may not charge more or less than the rates on file.

You can request a copy of the mover's rates on file with the DTE. Also inquire as to how the rates will be applied to the specific circumstances of your move. Ask if there are any other charges and how or why the final cost might differ from the estimate.

Who Packs For The Move?

That depends. Frequently, the customer packs all household items in cartons and the mover takes care of protecting the furniture. Use enough filler to reduce the chance of breakage. If you pack the cartons carefully and there is damage, the adjustor will consider the packing method as a determining factor in liability.

If you wish to have the mover pack all your household items, the move will be more expensive but will be professionally completed. However, the mover may bear additional liability by providing this service.

Must I Sign The Bill Of Lading/Contract? Yes

The bill of lading is the contract between you and the mover. The mover is required by law to prepare a bill of lading for every shipment it transports. The information on a bill of lading/contract is required to be the same information shown on the order for service. The driver who loads your shipment must give you a copy of the bill of lading/contract before loading your furniture.

Be sure the bill of lading/contract includes the mover's name, address, license number and telephone number where you can reach them. It should also indicate an address and telephone number, furnished by you, where the mover can communicate information regarding your shipment. The bill of lading should also include the date of loading, date of delivery, storage instructions, if any, and the declared or released valuation of your shipment (refer to [Placing a value on your household possessions](#)). You are required to sign the bill of lading/contract.

It is your responsibility to read the bill of lading/contract (front & back) before you sign it. If you do not agree with something on the bill of lading/contract, do not sign it until you are satisfied that it indicates the service you have ordered.

The bill of lading requires the mover to provide the service you have requested and that you must pay the mover the charges for the service provided.

The bill of lading/contract is an important document. Do not lose or misplace your copy. You should have it available until your shipment is delivered, all charges are paid and all claims, if any, are settled. Do not underestimate the importance of the bill of lading.

Should I Schedule A Backup Day?

Actually, rather than schedule a backup day, it is best to reconfirm with the mover 48 hours in advance of your moving day.

How Will I Be Expected To Pay?

Discuss the method of payment before your move. Some companies request cash; some will accept a credit card or personal check; while others will only take a certified check. It depends on the terms of the written contract or your oral agreement. Be sure to read the bill of lading/contract carefully.

Movers Responsibility For Loss And Damage

Many public movers offer to you, as the customer, a base rate called a declared rate, which is on file with the DTE. The base rate limits the mover's responsibility for your goods to \$.60 per pound per article and is not to be construed as insurance. This means that if any article is damaged or lost, you are entitled to be reimbursed for the actual damage or loss not to exceed \$.60 times the actual weight of the article (Example: 50 pound article – movers maximum liability is \$30.00 / \$.60 x 50 pounds).

Most movers offer you the option of increasing your declared value above \$.60 per pound per article. Check with your mover to see if this option is available. Ask the mover for a list of articles not covered by declared valuation.

How Long Do I Have To Report Damage?

The terms of the bill of lading/contract may set specific time limits. Read the bill of lading/contract carefully before you sign it. If you have a damage claim, save the damaged items so the mover or adjuster will be able to make a proper judgment. It is in your best interest to report a claim promptly to the mover or adjuster and confirm it in writing.

What Should I Do If I Am Dissatisfied With Any Aspect Of The Move?

Your first step should be to contact the mover and explain the problem. Often you will be able to resolve matters at this level with little difficulty. If you cannot resolve your issue with the mover, you should contact the DTE. The Department's Transportation Division is obligated to investigate written complaints.

Checklist For Easier Moving

- Be sure the mover has a Massachusetts DTE license.
- Request and obtain a written estimate.
- Check with the DTE for additional information concerning liability coverage, rates and complaint history of the mover.
- Make sure to be present during your move.
- Review the written bill of lading/contract (front & back) carefully before signing.
- Agree to the method and terms of payment before moving day.
- During unloading, check your household goods carefully before signing off on their condition. Be sure the bill of lading/contract gives you the right to take a reasonable amount of time to check items for damages.
- Ask the mover to check the van to ensure that all your household goods have been delivered.
- If an issue should arise regarding the storage of your shipment contact the Department of Public Safety at (617) 727-3200. The Department of Telecommunications & Energy does not regulate the storage of household goods.

Additional Information can be obtained at:

Massachusetts Movers Association
1 Robert Toner Blvd
North Attleboro, MA 02760
Phone - 508.699.0023
Fax - 508.699.0025
Email: info@massmovers.org
Website: massmovers.org

Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications & Energy
Transportation Division
1 South Station
Boston, MA 02110
Tel: (617) 305-3559
Website: www.state.ma.us/dpu

Massachusetts State Police
Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Section
906 Elm Street
Concord, MA 01742
Tel: (978) 369-1004
Website: www.state.ma.us/msp

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
Tel: 617-494-2733
Website: www.fmcsa.dot.gov