

EASING INTO A MOVE

BY KATHY SCOTT

Moving is considered one of life's greatest stresses, especially given that it involves leaving behind the comfort of familiar surroundings, friends and routines. While the emotional challenges associated with a move are inevitable, planning out a careful move can alleviate some of the discomfort. If possible, try to make a moving plan at least six to eight weeks prior to your actual moving day.

Obtain three different movers' estimates. The summer and the last few days of each month are the busiest times for movers, and some charge higher rates because of this. If you can be flexible, try to schedule your move in the middle of the month and avoid moving in June, July and August. Moving companies provide varying degrees of service such as packing household goods. Some clients choose to save money and do the packing themselves. Still others allow the mover to pack more fragile items like mirrors or china.

Ask your salesperson if the company is a member of the American Moving and Storage Association (AMSA). Members of the AMSA abide by the terms of the Association's published tariffs (rates for moving) and agree to participate in the Arbitration Program sponsored by the organization.

The AMSA also offers alerts to individuals choosing a mover. Never consider a mover that refuses to provide you with an estimate without ever seeing your home or your furniture. Beware of "low-ball" movers. There are several factors that go into the cost of a move – time of year, where you move, weight of the items and distance of travel. There may also be extra charges if the home has stairs; however, companies may leave out these additional charges in the hopes of getting your business.

Once you've interviewed several moving companies, make sure you have the details of each estimate and retain a copy. If you are moving out of state, your

mover is required by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to provide you with the consumer booklet, *Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move*, and information about its dispute settlement program.

Understand the level of protection assumed by the mover for your goods. Full value replacement is an added option that will replace any article that is lost, damaged or destroyed at today's prices. Released value is more economical, but it offers limited protection of only .60 cents per pound, per article. Deductibles may apply in both instances so be sure to get specifics.

Once your goods are packed, write your name on several sides of each box in order to make it easier to identify above and beyond the inventory stickers placed on it. The driver is required to give you a copy of the bill of lading when your items are loaded into the truck. This is your receipt and the contract with your mover for transportation.

When your goods arrive at your new home, make sure you are present to inspect them. Do not sign anything concerning their condition until you have inspected each box and every piece of furniture. If there is some damage, write that on the inventory list. Before the movers leave, make sure your appliances have been hooked up. Then take a deep breath and begin settling into your new home.