

Managing Your Household Goods Move

1. Moving Options

There are two types of household goods moves, Personally Procured Moves (PPM) and Government managed moves. Many single service members (about 18%) opt to Do It Themselves and execute a Personally Procured Move. [PPM](#) allows a service member to move household goods and collect an incentive payment from the government when they have orders for permanent change of station (PCS), temporary duty (TDY), separation or retirement, or assignment to, from, or between Government quarters. A Government managed move is handled through the installations transportation office and is a good option if you have a lot of personal property or moving overseas.

If you want to learn all about how to do a PPM, go to the new [Move.Mil](#) website and use the calculators; find your weight entitlements; perform self counseling; connect to your local transportation office, and manage your move efficiently from your own home computer.

2. Overseas Moves

Deciding what to pack, what to ship, and what to store can be a real challenge when going overseas. Whether you are an "old hand" or are new to moving and living overseas, you'll want to check out the Household Goods Overview page in Plan My Move.

Uncertainty and the stress of time constraints for moving will tempt you to "overpack" in an attempt to prepare for every possible event. As questions arise, check with your sponsor who is a great source of information and "on-the ground" experience. Families that have recently returned from your future overseas assignment can share lots of experiences, both good and bad. Listen to them, but make up your own mind about what is best for your family. While the final decisions are up to you, here are some questions to ask and some ideas on how to organize your personal property to make your overseas move as easy as possible.

What are your allowances and limitations?

Most overseas locations are "weight restricted" destinations. That means that you will only be allowed to ship a portion of your PCS weight allowance overseas. The rest of your property will be placed in long-term storage stateside at Government expense. Your traffic management/transportation office will be able to tell you exactly how much you can ship overseas.

Where will you be living?

To make the most of the amount of property you can ship, find out about where and how you'll be living overseas. Will you be living in government quarters or "on the economy" in a foreign community nearby the installation? Most government quarters overseas are apartment/condo-sized units with strict limits on the number of bedrooms a family will be authorized. If you will

be in government quarters, get a floor plan with room dimensions to help you figure out where (and if) your furniture will fit. Time spent planning before the move can prevent problems when you get into quarters.

Foreign apartments and rental homes overseas will almost always be much smaller than you are used to stateside. Added to that, there will probably be no closets. Ship what you will need, but cut it back to the minimum necessary.

What items will be provided by the government?

The furnishing management office at your new overseas location may provide you with some or all of your major appliances and large items of furniture, like wardrobes. Try not to ship duplicate items that you own. This will save wear and tear on your furniture and the appliances will be better suited to your overseas location. Electrical appliances are not recommended when moving to Europe due to the change in voltage.

If your dependents will not be "command sponsored," find out if you will be able to use government furniture and appliances. If not, plan your shipments accordingly within the weight allowances you have available. In Europe, command sponsorship is mandatory for government quarters and benefits.

Deciding what to ship and what to store

You can divide your personal property up to five ways when you go overseas! Good planning beforehand can save you money and inconvenience during and after your move. Use each of these shipments to make your move as comfortable and trouble-free as possible.

Checked Luggage -- Pack just the clothing, medications and toiletries you'll need while in transit and immediately after your arrival. Leave room for a few amenities like games and books, but keep it light. Remember you will be restricted as to the number and weight of bags you can check or carry onto the aircraft taking you overseas.

Mail -- One easy way to keep your checked luggage light is to mail extra items that you'll need immediately upon arrival and while you are in transient quarters. Linens, towels, additional clothing are all things you may want to mail ahead. You can send it to yourself at your new address or your sponsor can receive it and hold it for your arrival. You'll have to pay for this yourself, so keep track of the expense.

Unaccompanied Baggage -- Unaccompanied baggage is a Government sponsored shipment that moves by air to your new location. Your unaccompanied baggage should be available for delivery by the time you arrive at your new duty station. The amount of unaccompanied baggage you can ship will be limited. This shipment should be the "must have" items you need to set up housekeeping in your new location. You may also want to include a change of "seasonal" clothing (like warm jackets and coats) in your unaccompanied baggage.

Large items of furniture are not permitted in unaccompanied baggage. The furnishing management office and lending closet may be able to help you fill your housekeeping needs until your furniture and other personal property arrives. Plan your unaccompanied baggage around these resources, and keep it light. Remember, you will have to move these items into your new permanent quarters, if you take delivery of your unaccompanied baggage while you are in transient quarters.

Personal Property Shipment -- Your furniture and the remainder of the personal property you'll need during your overseas assignment will go into your personal property shipment. Since this shipment moves by container ship, it will be several weeks or months until it arrives at your new assignment. Keep in mind that you will not want to take delivery of your personal property until you are in your new, permanent quarters. Think carefully about shipping electric tools, large electrical appliances, and items like sound systems and TVs. The electric power in much of the world is different than that of the U.S. Check with your sponsor to see if you will need to use transformers to make these appliances work. Even with a transformer, some items will not work the way they should. If moving to Europe you should not bring any large electrical appliances.

Long-term (non-temporary) Storage -- Everything that is left over will need to go into long-term storage (what the Government calls Non-temporary storage). This storage will be at Government expense for the duration of your tour, as long as the total weight of your shipments and storage doesn't exceed your PCS weight allowance. Think carefully before you put items into permanent storage as often appliances will not work after 2-3 years and you may out grow clothing. It is better to sell things or donate them rather than store them and have them sustain possible damage that will require you to throw the property away at a later date when you return from your tour.

Carefully check that items are in the right shipment before you sign the descriptive inventory form.

3. Creating Inventories

With all these shipments, you need to help the movers keep it straight! Put your luggage and hand carried items in the car and lock it on moving day. Make sure you separate your various shipments into different rooms and tag larger items so that the movers can find what goes into unaccompanied baggage, overseas personal property, and long-term storage. Double check the inventory list the movers give you before they leave with your shipments. Make a copy of the inventory lists and give them to a friend or family member who is not traveling with you. Put your copies of the lists in your luggage to hand carry.

Types of Inventories

The household goods transportation service provider will prepare a [descriptive inventory](#) that lists the condition of all your furnishings and the general content of packed boxes. It is a good idea to make a list of large or unusual items (piano, pool table, china cabinet, wall unit, large glass or stone table top, satellite dish, hot tub, boat, motorcycle, recreational vehicle, etc.) to bring with you to your transportation counseling session.

High Value Inventory

If you decide to have your movers move your expensive and valuable items, you will need to make a [high-value inventory list](#) that identifies each item. Examples of high-value items include: antiques, art and coin collections, expensive jewelry and precious stones. You should also have some type of proof of value, like an appraisal. Use a video camera or take close-up pictures to record the condition of your furniture and show what your expensive and valuable items look like before the move. It's a good idea to save a paper copy of this list in a fireproof safe, in a safe deposit box, or somewhere outside of your home.

Why is an accurate inventory important?

Play this "game": sit in your kitchen and [make a list](#) of everything in the living room. Now go to the living room and see how many items you forgot! If you had a loss during a move or in a fire, flood, or other disaster, you would receive NO MONEY for items not listed. And that was just one room! With a complete inventory, you will maximize the money you receive to replace those items.

A complete inventory consists of three things:

- A detailed list
- Proof of ownership
- Proof of value

Value is determined by the age of the item, original cost, current condition and/or a professional appraisal, especially for antiques, jewelry, artwork, collectibles, oriental carpets, and other one-of-a-kind and specialty items.

How to create a detailed inventory

Make an itemized list of collections, of small items, and of items that are easily pilfered - movies, CD's, tapes, stamp collections, book collections, and jewelry.

Create or buy an inventory notebook; many are organized by room. List all items including pertinent details. Add pictures or appraisals.

The packers/movers will create a household goods inventory which lists all property the carrier packs and picks up and it provides supporting evidence in the event a claim is filed for loss and

damage. As the items are packed, the movers will assign standardized symbols or abbreviations next to the packed items and these symbols document pre-existing damage to the owner's property. (You can find these codes on the descriptive inventory form.) The numbers and letters indicate the location and the type of damage. If there is a disagreement between the owner and the carrier on the descriptive symbols assigned to the property, the owner will circle the number and describe the disagreement in the remarks section of the document. The owner should ensure all items are packed before signing the inventory.

Proof of Ownership, a combination of methods

Save receipts of major item purchases - furniture, appliances, electronics, jewelry, etc. Include the date, price, item name and serial number on the receipt. Save receipts in a folder, or scan them and burn them onto a CD.

Take pictures of high-value items or make a video tape of the items. For each, write the date, condition, purchase price, serial number. Family members in the photo or video give more proof that the item is yours; or, include a newspaper showing the date. If possible have the item turned on, showing that it is in working condition. The advantage of a video camera over a photo is that you will capture on film small items that could be easily overlooked - clothing, things on the walls, plants, toys. Also, you can talk on tape, adding details as you go through the house.

With any of these methods, it is important to keep the inventory updated. You should review your list before each move; most insurance companies recommend that you review it every 6 months. The more current and complete it is, the more justification you have to receive a fair and quick settlement. The [Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command](#) can assist you with inventories forms and pamphlets on moving.

A few extra tips

- Don't forget to inventory places like the basement, garage, attic, shed, or patio.
- Make a copy of your inventory to store elsewhere; if your entire household is destroyed or lost it does you no good to have a complete inventory if it also is destroyed. Send it to someone in another part of a country, or put it in a safe deposit box.
- Review the coverage on your homeowner's/renter's policy - it may be time to revise it.
- Make sure you know what is and is not covered under contract with the mover. Your inventory can help you determine how much insurance you should have when moving. It may be worthwhile to pay for extra coverage.
- Make copies of important documents (wedding/birth certificates, car titles, certain contracts) to maintain in an alternate location.
- Give duplicates of irreplaceable photographs such as wedding and baby pictures to someone else. No amount of money can replace these sentimental items!
- Borrow or buy an engraver to mark stereos, bikes, TV's. If stolen and recovered, you can get it back and the thief can be prosecuted.