

Military OneSource Podcast — Moving in the Military

Program title: Containerization of Your Personal Property

Episode transcript:

Intro voiceover:

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast. Military OneSource is an official program of the Defense Department, with tools, information and resources to help families navigate all aspects of military life. For more information, visit militaryonesource.mil.

Bruce Moody:

Welcome to the Military OneSource podcast. I'm Bruce Moody.

Military families move a lot. It's what we do. We move so often that the acronym PCS is, well, that's one of the few acronyms that we allow in this podcast. It stands for permanent change of station, but just think of it as shorthand for a military move. Today, we're going to focus on moving, specifically, how we move your stuff from here to there. Within that topic, we're going to zero in on crates and containers, and to do that, Jason Middleton returns to the podcast, and he joins us from Germany. Great to have you on the podcast.

Jason Middleton:

Hi, Bruce. Thanks for the invitation. Well, as you mentioned, I'm Jason Middleton from the TRANSCOM DPMO team. I've been a member of TRANSCOM for about five and a half years now. Prior to my civil service adventure, I spent 23 active-duty years as a part of the Traffic Management or TMO career field. So, whether it's been coordinating moves for military members or moving myself, I understand the challenges our DOD families endure as they transition from one assignment to another.

I'm currently sitting in beautiful Sembach, Germany, serving as the chief of the DPMO UCOM team. Essentially, we are the TRANSCOM point of contact for any personal property issue within Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Lastly, I'm just happy to be here and share with Military OneSource and our DOD customers some essential strategies leading to a successful move.

Bruce:

Hey, thanks, Jason. Great to have you back with us. When we talk about moving, the topic of crates and containers comes up a lot, and it sounds like an odd thing to focus on, but I think people will really come to appreciate why we're going to spend a few minutes kind of talking about the differences. Let's just begin there. What's the difference between containerization and crating?

Jason:

Well, great question, Bruce. I mean, those two terms are at times confusing for a lot of our customers, and it's definitely important for our customers to understand the distinction between the two. Containerization is the term we use to describe the external containers, and emphasis on external containers, that all of our personal property items will be placed on during transport. These types of household goods containers are constructed from heat-treated lumber and plywood and used for moving shipments to, from and between our overseas locations. Our transportation service providers utilize various modes: land, whether it's line haul, truck or rail; air and sea, via commercial and military means.

Transitioning from containerization to crating. Crating or special crating is the term used for smaller, internal crates used to pack specialty items. For example, grandfather clocks, delicate appliances that are moving, that the moving company identifies as requiring additional protection for safe transport. Now, special crating may be utilized for any type of household goods movement, no matter the destination.

Bruce:

All right. While containerization is usually reserved for an overseas move, is it possible to request that my domestic shipment be containerized if it's not already scheduled to be shipped that way?

Jason:

Yes, it is possible to request containerization for some domestic moves, and you can discuss most of those options and/or criteria with the transportation office or during your counseling session. In addition to being used for shipments that may require storage in transit, or SIT, there are some other factors that may qualify a domestic shipment for containerization.

For example, a shipment is a suitable candidate for containerization when it meets all of the following criteria: The shipment's estimated weight is 10,000 pounds or less and [you are] moving during our peak season, which runs May 15 to Sept. 30; or, 3,000 pounds or less during our non-peak season, which runs from Oct. 1 to May 14; and the shipment must be moving farther than 800 miles. Finally, the shipment must not contain extra-large items that will not fit in a standard household goods container with dimensions about 7 feet by 7 feet by 4 feet.

Bruce:

OK. All right. If I request crating or containerization, am I guaranteed to receive it?

Jason:

Well, we always do our best to accommodate, but there's no guarantee to either crating or containerization. Using a container for a domestic move is often considered an optional service, so factors such as price and material availability might result in your request being denied. Additionally, using a crate for a specialty item is considered an optional service for most types of moves. Again, your request may be denied.

Keep in mind that you are allowed to keep the crates from previous moves, so, if you have the ability to store the crate, then that might be a great option. However, we understand that not

everyone has space for crates, so no worries if you don't. Your transportation provider will remove it from your residence on the day of delivery.

Bruce:

OK. Now that everything's been loaded onto a container, let's talk about the sealing process. What do we mean when we talk about these tamper-evident seals?

Jason:

Another great question. Well, tamper-evident seals are designed to provide reasonable evidence when a container has been opened or tampered with during transportation. The moving company is required to place tamper-evident seals on all international, on the company baggage and domestic household goods containers.

Bruce:

Do you sign or should I sign the seals that are on the containers?

Jason:

No, there's no need to sign each seal. However, you will sign the inventory. The seal number for each seal for each container will be annotated by the moving company on the inventory, and the moving company will cross reference the inventory with the container number itself. It is your responsibility to verify the seal information is correct prior to signing the inventory.

Bruce:

Got it. Once the containers are sealed, can they be opened during transit?

Jason:

Well, yes. Seals may be broken by customs or other government officials in performance of their official duties. Also, on rare occasions, seals may be damaged as a result of normal transportation movement. Should this occur, though, the containers will be resealed, and the moving company must add a notation in DPS with the seal numbers. Other than those instances, the moving company should not break the seals until the containers are at your residence, ready for delivery.

Bruce:

OK. If my containers are delivered without seals, what should I do?

Jason:

Important question. What I'll do is, I'll provide you with two scenarios to illustrate.

Scenario one: Your shipment arrives at the destination, and you observe a tamper-evident seal torn, and nothing else appears out of order. This is the case in 99% of the shipments arriving without seals or the seals are not intact. In this case, you just note on your delivery documents that the seals were not intact or missing. You should also use the inventory to account for all the

items. If any of the items are found missing or damaged, list these items on the Notification of Loss or Damage at Delivery form, which will be provided by your moving company.

Now, scenario number two: Your shipment arrives at the destination, and you observe one or more tamper-evident seals missing or not intact, and there are other indicators. For example, the containers are damaged, items in the containers are not where you recall them being placed. OK. First thing you want to do, as mentioned above, verify on the delivery documents that the seals were not broken by customs or other government officials in the performance of their official duties. OK? If there is no record of that, what I want you to do is stop the move and call your transportation office. Request their advice, and, if feasible, a quality control inspector's visit to your residence. By the way, this advice is applicable anytime you have a situation or concern at your pick-up or your delivery that you feel should be addressed immediately.

Bruce:

All right. What we're talking about today is about your household goods shipment. Now, if you're conducting an overseas move, you're likely to also have an unaccompanied baggage shipment that would come as a separate shipment in its own container. Is there anything special to know about an unaccompanied baggage container?

Jason:

Yes. During the counseling process, your transportation counselor will provide a full explanation of your unaccompanied baggage entitlements. But here's a summary. You can expect your unaccompanied baggage to move as a separate expedited shipment in its own container. An unaccompanied baggage shipment should include items that you need immediately or soon after arriving at your destination. Some examples include, but not limited to, clothing and personal items, small kitchen essentials and items such as cribs, play pens and strollers.

Bruce:

Are there size limitations for an unaccompanied baggage container?

Jason:

While there are no documented size limitations, there are weight limitations set based on the type of tour, assignment location, your rank and dependency status. The weight of your unaccompanied baggage shipment will be subtracted from your Joint Travel Regulation weight entitlement, your JTR weight entitlement. So, it's critically important to keep track of the weight of each of your shipments so you don't accidentally exceed your weight entitlement. You can use our weight estimator tool to discover the average weight of standard household goods items and obtain a total estimated weight calculation, so that you can compare that to your actual authorized weight entitlement. You can find the weight estimator tool under the online tool section of the Military OneSource Personal Property Resources page.

Bruce:

Yep, it's there. We'll put a couple of links in the program notes for this episode. You can just click on it and off you go. Jason, where can customers go to get more information on this topic or just to get help?

Jason:

You can go to the Moving Your Personal Property landing page on Military OneSource to find additional information on this subject and many other moving topics. We have a fact sheet specifically for crating and containerization that can be found on our Personal Property Resources page. We also suggest that if you have any questions, that you could always call your local transportation office, and they can provide answers and walk you through various shipping options.

Bruce:

Cool. Of course, you can also call Military OneSource, the call center. If you call them and just say, "Hey, I'm moving," they can direct you to the Personal Property landing page and to just get you in touch with the resources that you need. Jason, any final words on today's topic before we wrap up?

Jason:

No, just thanks for having me on.

Bruce:

Jason Middleton, thank you so much for being on the podcast. I know you and I are working on other episodes to talk about how we can get people's personal property delivered, so thanks so much for joining us today.

I want to remind you that Military OneSource is officially part of the Defense Department. We are a website, we're a call center and we are a podcast, so please go ahead and subscribe. We cover a lot of different topics helping military families navigate military life. Have a great day. Thanks for listening. I'm Bruce Moody. Take care. Bye-bye.