

Military OneSource Podcast — Moving in the Military

Program title: Conducting a Personally Procured Move

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:

Hello, and welcome to the podcast. I'm Bruce Moody. We are talking again about moving your stuff. It's what we do in the military, and we do it a lot, and we send our stuff all over the planet, so it's an important topic. And we've got Jason Middleton back with us on the podcast to talk about this. Jason, welcome.

Jason Middleton:

Hi, Bruce and thanks for the invitation. I'm Jason Middleton from the TRANSCOM DPMO team. I've been a member of the TRANSCOM for about five and a half years now. Prior to my civilian service, I spent 23 years on active duty as a part of traffic management or TMO career field. So, whether it's been coordinating moves or moving myself, I definitely understand the challenges that 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. And, 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:

So, let's get right into it. Thanks, Jason. So, what we're going to do today is we're going to talk about personally procured moves. My first question is going to be personally procured moves. What are they? And for those of us of a certain age, is that the same as a DITY move, a do-it-yourself move? Take it away, Jason.

Jason:

Good question. Bruce, a personally procured move is a move that you perform or arrange yourself. And as you mentioned, some folks may recall the term DITY move, well, DITY move, or do-it-yourself move, left out one particular option and that's to arrange it yourself by locating a firm to handle a move. There are typically two types of PPMs, a full or partial PPM. A full PPM is performed when you move all your goods yourself, instead of using a DOD-arranged moving

company. The full PPM is a good option, if you prefer to handle the entire moving process yourself or use a specific moving company that is not available when booking your shipment through the DOD. Now, this is a great option, if you desire more flexibility and control over the scheduling, packing, transport and delivery of your goods. Also, if you suspect that you will exceed your weight allowance, performing a PPM will help reduce the worry of receiving a notification of excess costs.

In some instances, you may be able to retain the incentive given to you, but not spent on moving expenses, thus resulting in a profit – minus taxes, of course. A partial PPM is when you only move some of your goods yourself while the remaining is moved using a DOD TSP or a moving company. This is also a great option, if you have high value or sentimental items that you want to ensure don't get damaged or lost, you may also perform a partial PPM to ensure items like clothes and medicine, toiletries and cleaning supplies are expedited to your destination.

Bruce:

When we talk about moves of the personally procured variety, I think the aspect of a partial move is a really interesting one. And I hope that we spend some time getting into that. I'm probably going to throw a lot of hypotheticals your way as we go about exploring what that means, because there's a lot of really interesting options that are available to families. So, let's just start right away with talking about the various ways that you transport your goods. What are the options, the various ways that you can transport your goods when you are conducting a personally procured move?

Jason:

Well, Bruce, you can conduct a PPM in a variety of ways. I mean, for example, renting portable moving storage containers. Now this is a great option. I mean, there are numerous firms out there that will drop off a pod or a storage container at your residence, allow you to pack it and load it at your leisure. And then they will handle the pickup and transport to the location you desire. Now, you can also just rent a truck or a trailer, and we're all familiar with U-Haul or Penske rental truck options. You can also use your own vehicle or trailer. And now, this is a great option if you have very little to move. You can also hire a commercial moving firm yourself, full service, a great option. You can just sit back and allow them to do all the work. And lastly, you can ship using a small-package carrier, such as the United States Postal Service, FedEx or UPS.

Bruce:

That's a huge variety right there. So, you seem to cover a lot of ground. Let me throw one of these hypotheticals your way, because you mentioned that if I'm the service member and I'm moving and I'm doing a personally procured move, and I decided that I want to take my vehicle or trailer and bring something of value to me that I can be reimbursed. So, let's say I have something that I want to move, but my vehicle isn't big enough, but my cousin has a pickup truck and I want to put this thing that I want to personally move in my cousin's pickup truck. Is it possible for that individual to get reimbursed for that to be an acceptable mode of transportation?

Jason:

Absolutely. I think the key there is that the reimbursement or the incentive would still go to you. So, you would use your buddy's vehicle and we'll still have to follow all of the normal rules when it comes down to the PPM process itself. The key is that you'll be reimbursed and then you'll have to talk with your buddy about sharing the calls.

Bruce:

Got it, got it. It really is a buddy system and you've got to work it out with that individual on your own. So, how about temporary storage? Would I be allowed temporary storage for my household goods, if I'm in the process of conducting a personally procured move?

Jason:

Absolutely. If you believe you may need temporary storage, just contact your local transportation office to get authorization for either extension of the rental time for your rental truck trailer or portable storage container or use of a mini storage warehouse or commercial storage facility.

Bruce:

OK. So, basic question here. How do I go about booking a personally procured move?

Jason:

OK. Just like with a DOD-arranged household goods move, you will need to book this type of shipment at PPM in DPS, Defense Personal Property System. However, before you book your PPM, you must obtain approval from your transportation office and they will explain all of your options for conducting a PPM and the requirements for getting reimbursed. If you choose to hire a commercial moving company, discuss those details with your transportation office first. Now we recommend utilizing a mover registered with the federal government, and you can find a list of companies on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's website. Now this site offers free resources and tools to protect yourself from those rogue movers who may have been cheaper. However, after picking up your personal property, they attempt to increase their rates, not to mention holding your personal property hostage until you accept their payment demands. So, you don't want to get caught in a situation like that. You want to absolutely do your homework.

Bruce:

That's good advice. And the link that you're referring to, we're going to put it in the program notes so people can click on it and find an authorized, vetted, safe carrier. Now, what do I need to submit in order to be reimbursed for a personally procured move?

Jason:

Good question. To ensure you're reimbursed for your PPM, here are five important responsibilities. Number one, if you're using a properly owned truck or commercial firm, it's your responsibility to ensure the weight tickets are obtained from a certified weight station. There are various companies that offer certified weight scales. A quick internet search can help you locate the scale location nearest you. Number two, keep all receipts. Receipts for expenses

are required to file your claim and must be retained for tax filing purposes. You can contact a tax professional regarding deductions associated with your move. Number three, keep all original documents and provide copies, when initiating your PPM settlement claim. You'll want to provide an explanation for any missing documents. For example, if you're missing a weight ticket due to a vehicle accident, you'll want to submit a copy of the accident report. So number four, if you receive an advanced operating allowance, you have 45 days from the planned move start date to turn in all paperwork.

Take note of the date and finally pay careful attention to the amount of wait for each portion of your shipment and plan accordingly. If your moving costs go above your entitlement amount, the government is not obligated to reimburse you for those expenses. You may ask, "Hey, perhaps you're unsure what your total weight is?" Well, we have a great weight estimator tool for you to discover the average weight of your standard household goods items and obtain a total estimated weight calculation to compare to your authorized weight entitlement. You can find a weight estimator tool under the online tool section via the Military OneSource personal property resources page. And lastly, one last note, if you need guidance on submitting your final documentation, contact your local transportation office, or see the PPM checklist and expense certification form that was generated in DPS during your counseling session.

Bruce:

That's a lot of good information and a listener wouldn't be faulted for listening to that for a second time. Really good information. I always wondered what those waste stations on the side of the highway were for. And now I know. I understand there's different reimbursement options when we're talking about personally procured move and they're authorized for different reasons. Just explain that for me.

Jason:

OK. Yeah. The first type of PPM is called a member-elected PPM. As an incentive for conducting a PPM, you're authorized to receive 100% of the government-constructed costs to perform a partial or a full PPM. The government-constructed cost is the cost the government would have paid if the move and/or storage was coordinated by a government-procured moving firm, and it would also include any applicable accessorial. So, performing a PPM-elected move allows you to receive an incentive. It's a one-time payment from the government and you retain those funds not spent, minus the taxes. The incentive is based on your actual household goods, transported and supported with weight tickets not to exceed your authorized weight allowance. And during your counseling session, your local transportation office will provide you with an estimate of your incentive. Incentive estimates are based on the estimated weight to be moved and the authorized distance from origin to destination.

Now, there's a second type of PPM and it's called an actual-cost reimbursement. On rare occasions, an actual-cost reimbursement PPM is approved when the government is not able to book your shipment with any type of booking company or a moving company during a specific time frame. Now, the approval for an actual-cost reimbursement PPM must be in writing, provided by the transportation office and in accordance with your service headquarters guidelines. Note, I've identified the two PPM reimbursement types that are for military personnel only. PPMs for DOD civilians are a bit more detailed. For example, DOD civilians must have special authorization on their PCS orders in order to perform a PPM. Additionally, DOD

civilians only qualify for an actual-cost reimbursement or a commuted-rate reimbursement. And you can speak with your transportation office to learn more about those details.

Bruce:

OK, so you referenced the actual-cost reimbursement, and then you mentioned that it's a rare option. I guess my question to you would be, can you talk a little bit more about this reimbursement and explain to us why it's a rare option?

Jason:

Well, Bruce, an actual-cost reimbursement or an ACR PPM could become very expensive. And that's why we try to use it only on rare occasions, because when we say actual costs, that's actually what it means. For example, if we have a customer where they're approved for an actual-cost reimbursement, so they could in turn, go to a transportation service provider. And if the transportation service provider quotes them a \$30,000 move for a move that's within 100 miles, the government will reimburse the customer for that \$30,000 move. So that being said, it's important to being good stewards of taxpayers' dollars that we make absolutely sure that we cannot utilize the other option, which is the member-elected PPM.

Bruce:

Yeah. And we are learning a lot today. Thanks a lot, Jason. We've covered a lot of ground today. Are there any general tips that you would give to someone regarding a successful personally procured move?

Jason:

I think the main key to a successful PPM is to be organized and start early. Just be sure to make a list of all the necessary equipment, moving aids, packing material and vehicles that you're going to need for your PPM. Also, consider purchasing insurance to cover any loss or damages to your household goods. Regardless of whether you perform the PPM yourself, or you hire a commercial firm, you accept the risk associated with obtaining the appropriate amount of insurance coverage to protect your personal property.

Bruce:

So, kind of in summary here to take all of what we've learned, we want to let people know that they can always go to Military OneSource and find this information. Jason, there's two items, there's a fact sheet, and then there's a link we're going to have them put in the program notes. Can you talk to these? Tell us what we would expect once we open up this fact sheet in this page, when we're getting ready to learn about how to execute our own move, what can we find in these two resources?

Jason:

Bruce, the fact sheet on the Moving Personal Property landing page located on the Military OneSource page will provide you with a little bit more in-depth information on conducting a PPM. You'll also see some additional information I didn't discuss today, such as compensation

for special items and services. And always, if you have any questions, your transportation office can always provide you with additional guidance.

Bruce:

Excellent. Thank you so much for joining us today. Jason.

Jason:

Thanks, Bruce. Glad to be here.

Bruce:

Jason Middleton is chief of the Personal Property Office Europe, and he joins us from sunny Germany. Glad to have him with us again on the podcast to talk about moving our personal property.

I want to remind you that Military OneSource is an official resource of the Defense Department. We provide all kinds of resources to help you navigate military life. So, go ahead and subscribe to this podcast. We cover a lot of different topics, and we are glad to have you along. Thanks for joining us. I'm Bruce Moody. Have a great day. Bye-bye.