

Toronto Star  
Sat., June 29, 2013

# Planning is key to pain-free moving

Do your homework to avoid  
hassles and headaches

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Canada Day marks the busiest time of the year for movers.

"Kids are done school by the end of June, so it's the best time to transition them into a new home and settle into a new neighbourhood," explains Dustin Kroft, president of Toronto moving company Rent-a-Son. The fact it's a long weekend and the weather is usually pleasant makes it even more popular.

"So if you want to get a quality mover, hopefully you've called a minimum of eight weeks in advance to book," Kroft cautions. Otherwise, you could be out of luck.

If you do manage to find a mover at the 11th hour, you'll likely end up paying exorbitant rates, with no guarantee of high standards. And for those moving into or out of a condo building, failure to plan ahead may mean elevators are all booked.

"It's definitely good to give lots of notice," says Kroft.

But even those who plan well in advance might find themselves in sticky circumstances if they fail to do their due diligence and wind up with a shady mover.

A common scam in the unregulated moving industry is a crew holding a customer's belongings ransom and demanding additional payment to release the goods. In other cases, a dodgy mover will quote a lowball price for one move, then get a better offer from another customer and opt to go with the better-paying job, without notifying the first customer, leaving them in the lurch.



# Make sure your mover is certified and insured

MOVING from HI

Some movers book many moves in a day. "And if you're at the end of the line, when the time comes for your move the guys are exhausted, or they just don't show up," says Perry Thorne of Greg & Sons Moving.

To avoid pitfalls, customers should plan their moves properly.

## Do your research!

Doing your research is vital when you choose a mover. The Canadian Association of Movers is a good place to start. CAM can offer recommendations of reputable movers that are certified by the association. CAM-certified movers have valid insurance, a place of business, and WSIB coverage for employees, which means customers are protected if a worker is injured during a move.

Ontario's Ministry of Consumer Services has a "consumer-beware list," a searchable public record that indicates if a company has had any complaints filed against it. You can also check if the mover is in good standing with your local Better



VINCE TALOTTA/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO

Mover Ben Meighen working unloading furniture and house contents with partner Rob Trager.

## Business Bureau

Ask friends and family for recommendations, or survey social media networks. But beware: just because others had a great experience with a particular mover doesn't mean you will, too. "Every good mover has had a bad move, and every bad mover has had a good move," cautions John Levi, CAM president.

## Google can help in researching a pro-

pective mover; you can check if it has a legitimate website and cross-reference its phone numbers to see if it has operated under different business names, a serious red flag. Google Street View enables you to verify that the mover's address corresponds to a legitimate place of business. Review sites such as HomeStars or Yelp can provide valuable crowdsourced feed-

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back on moving companies. But take this with a grain of salt!

"There's nothing to stop me from going online and writing a whole bunch of rave reviews about my company," Thorne notes.

## Get several quotes!

Once you've winnowed your search to a few prospective movers, get quotes from each. Be wary of those that offer quotes too quickly. "That's usually an indication that (the mover) isn't asking the right questions and isn't doing their due diligence to find out what the move is going to look like," says Kroft. Don't evaluate a mover's merits based on price alone; the cheapest deal isn't necessarily the best deal and you get what you pay for.

## Under provincial law the final price can-

not be more than 10 per cent above the agreed-upon estimate. But if the conditions of the original agreement change—for example, you fail to mention you have a storage locker, or that your home has four bedrooms when you said there were two—the original estimate is rendered void.

## Depending on the size of the home, it's

best to have an estimate done on-site and in-person, to ensure everything is taken into account and that both parties are on the same page.

The moving company must then provide you with a written contract that outlines the cost estimate, size and value of items, quantity of boxes to be moved, who's responsible for packing, number of staff, duration of the move, size of vehicle and insurance coverage.

"All that stuff should be spelled out and made clear in writing, so the consumer knows they won't be paying for a bunch of up-charges after the fact," says Thorne.

Moving companies are required by law to have insurance, basic liability coverage (or \$60 for a 100-lb. couch) that covers 60 cents per pound of cargo

Movers can offer customers additional "replacement-value protection," which covers the full cost of replacing goods in the event of damage or loss. "But, if people pack their own stuff, the company won't be insuring the contents," warns Gary Kaye, owner of El Cheapo Movers.

Steer clear of movers offering cash-only services. "That's real bad news," he stresses. "You're probably dealing with somebody who doesn't pay taxes and doesn't have workers' compensation and insur-

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