

A CONSUMERS GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MOVER:

Get the most out of storage space



Canadians-on-the-move often need storage to fit their lifestyle choices. These folks should contract with a company that is reputable and that offers physical safety for their stored household effects. Locating such a company does not have to be difficult.

Here's what you need to know before you begin your search for storage space. Make sure you completely understand the services offered by a moving and/or storage company, your responsibilities and the protection for your goods, both in transit and on-site. And make sure you contact the Canadian Association of Movers (CAM) at 905-848-6579 or 1-866-860-0065 (toll free), or visit www.mover.net, for a list of reputable moving and storage companies.

Basically there are two kinds of storage for household goods:

- permanent storage (long-term), where goods are stored until you want them, and
- storage-in-transit (short-term), where goods are held in storage pending further transportation.

When preparing your goods for either short or long term storage, there are a number of important principles.

Make sure you have clearly identified and have a list of those articles that are going to be stored. With a proper listing, you will be able to compare your listing with the warehouse listing to get a quick and accurate explanation of your storage charges.

Your storage rate per month is based on either the volume or weight of containers, or a combination of the two. The volume rate is based on the company's known costs to operate their storage facilities. The weight rate is calculated by taking the vol-



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ume of the shipment and applying a conversion factor to arrive at an estimated weight. The company may also have a minimum charge for storage.

You will pay more for large, bulky items or ones with an unusual size or shape. You will also pay more if you pack your cartons poorly. Consider disposing of some items to ensure your monthly cost remains within your limit.

If you have contracted for storage-in-transit, your goods may be moved to an en-route storage facility. If the storage is permanent, your goods may be moved to an off-site warehouse. Make sure you find out exactly where the company will store your goods and advise them if their plan is problematic for you.

Identify items that you may need to remove from storage early, such as winter clothing, a baby carriage or sports equipment. The warehouse can place these items into an easily-accessible spot as the shipment is moved into storage. If the items are not listed separately, you may have to pay for warehouse labour and handling charges for

staff to search through the entire shipment.

The storage company will not accept responsibility for fragile articles, such as lampshades, ornaments, paintings, china, glassware, pictures, books, etc., that you pack yourself. Consider using the company's professional packing service to fully protect your property. Dangerous goods, perishable items and valuables are not acceptable for storage.

The storage company also will not accept responsibility for the mechanical, electrical or electronic functions of pianos, radios, clocks, refrigerators, television and stereo sets, etc., whether or not such articles are packed or unpacked by them. Neither will the company accept responsibility for articles in drawers, trunks, cases, etc., nor for loss or damage from any other cause, unless depository insurance is purchased.

Generally, storage is charged monthly. Some companies require a deposit for the first month's storage charge, wrapping and handling services. Moving costs generally apply to

shipments moving into or out of storage. Local hourly rates are assessed from the time the van leaves the warehouse until it returns and unloading is completed.

There may be a non-recurring warehouse wrapping and handling charge, for wrapping furniture with felt blankets or other protective materials; mothproofing and wrapping rugs and upholstered items; packing special items such as mattresses, mirrors, pictures and other large, fragile items; and servicing refrigerators and freezers to prevent growth of mildew.

You will be charged for warehouse handling services, such as palletizing or stacking a shipment; moving within the warehouse; and moving the shipment from within the warehouse to the dock for loading onto a van to leave storage.

You may also be charged for other storage services, including: packing/unpacking services, insurance; third-party services such as disconnecting and servicing appliances before moving, or cleaning wool carpets; or warehouse labour charges relating to special handling or early removal from storage.

You should provide the company with contact information in case of emergencies, as well as an approximate length of time of storage.

A reputable moving and storage company will provide you with detailed information about their services, liability and costs. Contact CAM and/or the following agencies to get useful information about your chosen company:

- the Better Business Bureau at 1-800-459-8875 (toll free) and
- the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, at 416-326-8800.