

Updated 3/30/2021

## Packing & Inventory Tips and Best Practices

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Marines and spouses often do not record their inventory adequately when the movers pick up and deliver their household goods. They are not always aware of their right to go through items in detail and only sign off on things when they are contented that they have recorded the condition of the items. This can cause increased stress for families during PCS season.

### Best Practices

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- 1) Place of Duty– service members and families “place of duty” when the moving companies are scheduled to pack and pick-up their household goods is at that home.  
One person is hard pressed to be able to supervise packers upstairs, downstairs and in the garage including taking care of kids and pets all at the same time. Remember, that family owns the gear the movers are handling.
- 2) Quality Assurance (DMO) – Keep contact information of DMO’s Quality Assurance department. Address complaints to Distribution Management Office (DMO) if the moving company’s practices are unsatisfactory.
- 3) Categorize – Schedule ample and appropriate time to inventory personal belongings and place in certain categories:
  - a) Moving Overseas
    - i. Unaccompanied Baggage (UB) – an express shipment to new location while waiting for the rest of belongings to arrive at a later date.
    - ii. Non-Temporary Storage (NTS) – long term storage of belongings located near the origin where items remain for the duration of tour overseas.
  - b) Partial Move – determine which belongings are the following:
    - i. Household Goods Move – HHG move completed by government-furnished moving company also called a Transportation Service Provider (TSP)
    - ii. Personally Procured Move (PPM) – a do it yourself move recommended for any irreplaceable valuables or for necessities

immediately needed at new location while waiting for transporters to arrive.

- c) Leave Behind – decide which belongings or items are going to part ways:
  - i. Garage Sales
  - ii. Thrift Store donation
  - iii. Give away to family members, friends or neighbors
  - iv. Dispose
  
- 4) Inventory – Account for all belongings:
  - a) Videotape each room, enable audio while taking video providing descriptions of the items.
  - b) Photograph each belongings in every room including makes, models and serial numbers.
  
- 5) Do Not Pack List
  - a) Generate a do not pack list of household belongings
  - b) Separate these valuable items by placing them in a room off limits to packers or secure them inside the vehicle.
  
- 6) Carry On – Diminish any risk of personal or family devastation by carrying on items considered of great value or irreplaceable valuables such as family heirlooms, photos, important documents etc.
  
- 7) Color Coding –Label all boxes with corresponding color of duct tapes designated for each room (i.e. kitchen is red, living room is blue, etc.)
  
- 8) Last Load – Label a box or few boxes as “last load” which would help to be one of the first boxes unloaded upon arrival.
  
- 9) Hand-made Projects (Furniture) – Replacement value is claimed on the raw materials used to build or make these projects. Maintain receipts for purchased materials.
  
- 10) Professional Gears – Ensure any professional books and gears are properly annotated in the inventory sheets so it doesn’t count against your weight entitlement.
  
- 11) Inventory Sheets Remarks/Comments – Ask questions if these remarks noted in the inventory sheets are not explained properly. These comments are proof moving company can use during claim process.
  
- 12) Quality Control – At the destination, quality control the first few boxes from each crate to ensure household goods are delivered to the rightful owner.
  
- 13) Call Out – Have the movers verbally call out each box number as they unload them off the truck; match it up on the inventory list

## Marine Spouses Moving Tips

### Jamie S, Camp Pendleton, CA

- 1) PURGE: Before a PCS, I like to go through as much stuff as I can and get rid of unnecessary items.
- 2) TIMEFRAME: When we move, it usually takes one day of packing and one day to load the truck. I definitely recommend the 2 days because it gives you time to inventory all your packed boxes before they pick them up the following day.
- 3) INVENTORY PAPERWORK: The inventory sheet that the company does is very important, but I also like to do my own. Make sure all your stuff is on the company's inventory sheet in case any issues arise later. Make a note of any expensive or particularly important items and always double or triple check the inventory paperwork before signing it. Also, be sure they are labeling all your boxes correctly along the way, it helps when they are delivered.
- 4) DESTINATION: When your things are delivered at your new destination, it usually is a much quicker process. They unload very fast. I usually do not have them unpack the boxes, but I do check them off the inventory sheet one by one as they bring them in. If any boxes or items are missing or damaged, you want to make sure you catch it and annotate it.
- 5) OVERALL: Ask any questions you feel necessary. I do stay present throughout the entire process from packing to delivering. I try not to hover, but I would not recommend leaving the movers unattended at any time. I also offer help, but they usually do not allow it. Be proactive, be patient, and always be polite would be my advice.

### Megan P., Camp Lejeune, NC

- 1) LABELING: Print sticker labels to put on each box with your name and phone number. There is a group on Facebook for items lost during a PCS move. I have seen a lot of missing boxes end up with other people's shipments and they are trying to track down the owners.
- 2) SECURE BELONGINGS: Anything not being moved by the company should either be in a vehicle or a locked room with a sign saying "Do not enter, Do not pack".
- 3) CLARITY:
  - a) Tell the movers before they start that you want to inspect and take pictures of EVERY item they are marking as scratched, soiled, torn, etc.
  - b) The companies mark items this way (even when nothing is wrong) so they can cover themselves if something happens in transit.
  - c) Tell them you won't sign any papers that say the item is damaged in anyway unless they have shown you and you took pictures.

- d) You can also write disagree, see pictures next to a description. If they have to show you everything they are marking damaged, they won't write it unless it actually is, because it slows them down.

4) ORGANIZATIONAL TOOL:

- a) Most of all, use an organizational binder.
- b) Keep all your paperwork in it. Whether you think you need it or not!
- c) The binder really is a life saver!

Spouse PCS advisory group tips

- 1) HAVE ON HAND: Your packers may not always bring items you believe they should have day of pack. Only YOU can assure you have these items ready:
  - a) Stretch wrap
  - b) Bubble wrap
  - c) TV Sleeve
  - d) Mattress Bag(s)
  - e) Moving pads/bands – use your own for specialty furniture
  - f) Labels or colored paper to ID furniture
  - g) Caution tape for areas of landscape or rooms to avoid
- 2) LABEL IT: You choose which room it came from, or which room it is going to? Be sure noted on inventory and you will have a better idea what was in the box if it wanders away.
- 3) DETAILS MATTER: Take a picture! Claims processing for Full Replacement Value (FRV) can be ruthless, preparation is the key. This label was the difference between a \$3,200 reimbursement and an \$800 reimbursement.
- 4) SPECIAL PACKING REQUEST: For specialty items and heirloom, leave Transportation Service Providers (TSP) "love notes" i.e. put in box please.
- 5) PREP DRAWERS: Prep your drawers by sorting items and storing them in Ziploc bags, then you may not have to rewash everything! Plus you avert the opportunity for movers to wrap each individual piece in paper.

CLOSET PREP:

- a) DO cover specialty clothing with a bag i.e. large clear drawstring bags to protect from dirt
- b) DO mark each item as "His" or "hers" for making of clothing box
- c) DO mark the item with high value i.e. if you ship uniform
- d) DO NOT use wire hangers – they can rust onto clothes

COLOR CODE:

- a) Carriers are no longer allowed to mark as member packed.
- b) Color code them by room or item i.e. use plastic storage bins.
- c) Mark in advance as fragile

- d) Place PPE in and weigh in advance
- e) Use plastic storage bins to organize belongings scheduled for Unaccompanied Baggage shipment.

**DAMAGE DESCRIPTIONS:** Descriptions will be written in by either the packer or the loader completing inventory. Address inaccuracies immediately! Make note on the inventory page before you sign off if you dispute condition. BE SURE you have taken photos.

**AWARENESS:**

- 1. If your goods are staged outside to load, ensure they are already numbered and fully inventoried with detailed descriptions!
- 2. Pay attention to loading practices, if you disagree inform the TSP

**WRAP IT & STRAP IT:**

- 1. Items going “door to door” should be wrapped with moving blankets and strapped into the truck for travel.
- 2. Items going OCONUS are typically wrapped with thick paper or placed into boxes