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WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW BEFORE HIRING A PROFESSIONAL MOVER

Did you know that The Miami-Dade County Consumer Services Department (**CSD**) regulates moving companies that operate in Miami-Dade? This means that if you're moving from Miami-Dade County to another part of Miami-Dade, Broward or Palm Beach counties, or if you're coming from Broward or Palm Beach counties to Miami-Dade, your move is covered by the Miami-Dade County Moving Ordinance. However, if you're leaving South Florida, or coming from out of state, then your move is not regulated by Miami-Dade's Moving Ordinance.

If you're planning a household move, the following tips may help eliminate some of the uncertainties associated with hiring a mover. This way, you can have time to concentrate on more important things, like packing.

Choosing a mover – It is important to note that moving vehicles must display the moving company's name, physical address, telephone number and moving registration number on both sides of the truck. In addition, the moving registration number must also be displayed in all advertising, including the yellow page listings, and on all estimate and contract forms. Furthermore, each moving truck must display a CSD decal indicating the business license expiration date. Before you hire a mover make sure that the business is registered with CSD by calling 305-375-3677.

Get a written estimate – Movers are required to provide you with a written estimate and a copy of the disclosure statement. Make sure the estimate contains an itemized list of what you plan to have delivered and ask if the estimate is guaranteed. Let the mover know ahead of time if they will be doing the packing. Although movers will charge you for the labor of packing and unpacking, they cannot charge for pads, blankets, strapping, and dollies. Make sure the mover is perfectly aware of everything that has to be moved. And here's why: The cost will increase if anything is added to the shipment that was not included in the estimate. Also, make sure the mover is aware of any special circumstances that might make the move challenging. For example, is there a possibility that the moving truck will have a hard time parking at your new place? Will the mover have to climb stairs or use an elevator to get your things to your new place? If you fail to provide this information at the time of your estimate, it may end up costing you more.

Get a written contract – Before the move begins, the mover must present you with a written contract and a [Tri-County Consumer Bill of Rights and Disclosure Statement](#) for your signature. Both documents must contain the final cost of your move, including inventory preparation, labor, transportation, packing materials costs, storage, and any additional valuation coverage you've purchased. Be sure to read it carefully and that you understand the agreement before you sign it. Then, be sure to ask for a copy and keep it in a safe place. If something goes wrong, you'll want to have it handy to state your case. If something in the contract looks fishy, trust your instincts and ask questions. You don't want your moving company to hold your things hostage and force you to pay extra costs.

Ask for a written inventory – Before loading your property into the truck, the mover is required to prepare an inventory listing each piece of property you are moving, including the number of sizes of boxes. The mover may charge you for the preparation of the inventory only if that charge was disclosed to you in writing beforehand.

Verify insurance coverage – Per the Miami-Dade County Moving Ordinance, movers are required to insure your property at a minimum of 60 cents per pound per article at no additional cost. However, the free minimum coverage does not change with the value of your property, which means that you may end up receiving less than what your property is worth. Movers are also mandated to offer you the opportunity to purchase additional insurance coverage.

Forms of payment – Every moving company must accept at least two of the following payment methods.

- Cash (cashier's check, money order, or a traveler's check).
- Personal Check (must show imprinted name and address).
- Credit Card (must include but not limited to VISA and MasterCard).

Filing a claim – You have up to 60 days after the final delivery of your goods to notify the moving company in writing of any claim for loss, damage, or delay. No claim for damage may be denied solely because the damage was not noted at the time of delivery. Filed claims must be promptly and thoroughly investigated by the mover or its insurance company. You must be notified of the status of your claim within 90 days of receipt of the claim.

Filing a complaint – If you cannot resolve a dispute directly with the mover or the moving business, call CSD at 305-375-3677. Experienced Consumer Protection Enforcement Officers will investigate your complaint and contact you with the results. If the mover cannot satisfy the complaint within ten (10) days of receipt, the mover must provide CSD a response stating the status of the complaint and the reasons for delay. The company has 90 days to provide CSD with the final disposition of the complaint. If violations of the Ordinance are detected, the business will be subject to enforcement action.

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