



Highlights: Moving Companies

Relocating is never easy, but working with a quality moving company can eliminate much of the stress. With ratings of local moving companies, price information, and expert advice, ***Twin Cities Consumers' Checkbook*** (Checkbook.org) will help make your move a smooth one. Highlights from Checkbook's report:

Tips for a smooth move

- Beware of brokers. In recent years, more moving brokers have been operating online. These companies simply collect a deposit and arrange for a moving company to handle the move. You have no control over which company is hired. And some brokers reportedly work with unlicensed or otherwise disreputable companies. Because brokers are paid up front, they may not be motivated to help resolve any disputes with the movers.
- To ensure you aren't dealing with a broker, if a moving company can't be reached via phone, or won't come to your home to provide an on-site written estimate, don't hire it.
- For intrastate moves of 50 miles or less, companies typically charge based on hourly rates for the number of workers and number of hours it takes to pack, load, move, and unload household goods. The only way to get a good price is to shop around.
- To get a good price (there are big differences—see comparisons below), have several reputable companies give you written estimates, showing the rates that are used to calculate the estimate—either per hour or rates based on weight and mileage.
- If the price is based on hours needed for the job, Checkbook recommends an estimate with a cap to prevent the movers from working more slowly, causing the cost to rise.
- Think about what services you'll want. You can save a lot of money by doing work yourself, particularly by doing your own packing—although having a company pack for you saves you time and gives you a better basis for filing a claim if damage occurs.
- Be sure estimates detail the services to be performed and include an inventory describing the major items to be moved.
- Be present and attentive when belongings are loaded and unloaded. Be sure the mover prepares an inventory and that it specifies the condition of each item.
- Carefully read the bill of lading (the contract between you and the mover) before you sign it, and keep it until your shipment is delivered, all charges are paid, and all claims, if any, are settled.
- As your goods are unloaded, check your inventory to be sure each item has arrived in good condition. Don't sign anything without first writing in notes of any damage.
- No matter who does the packing work, move fragile or valuable belongings on your own.

Price and quality of local companies

- Checkbook found substantial company-to-company price differences for the same moving jobs. For example:
 - Prices to move a four-bedroom house from Bloomington to Burnsville ranged from \$1,700 to \$3,600.
 - Prices to move a townhouse from Woodbury to St. Paul ranged from \$550 to more than \$1,200.
- Among the companies Checkbook evaluated, some were rated "superior" for "overall quality" by more than 80 percent of their surveyed customers. Others didn't fare as well, with one company receiving such favorable ratings from barely a third of its surveyed customers.

Checkbook's editors are available for interviews. Please contact Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 or jlettis@checkbook.org to schedule.