

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 16, 2021

Contact: Cheri Gyuro
cheri.gyuro@dca.ca.gov

State Investigators Nab Fraudulent Household Movers During Interstate Operation

California victim's goods discovered hidden in a storage facility by state investigators

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau of Household Goods and Services (BHGS) is warning consumers about malicious and deceptive practices by unpermitted moving companies and unscrupulous household moving brokers after uncovering a series of fraudulent activities by an unpermitted mover originating in California.

Last month, BHGS investigators uncovered household goods belonging to a California consumer who was victimized by the unpermitted mover. The victim's belongings were discovered at a storage facility in Northern California three months after the company was scheduled to relocate the goods to another state. The unpermitted mover failed to deliver the household items and ended all communications with the victim until a complaint was filed with BHGS.

District Attorneys from Napa and Sacramento Counties, New Jersey-based investigators from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and the New York Police Department assisted with this special operation. They also connected the same unpermitted mover to three other fraudulent cases in California.

BHGS urges California consumers to utilize its license lookup search tool at <https://bhgs.dca.ca.gov/enforcement/lookup.shtml>.

"Consumers need to be aware that all moving companies transporting used household goods in the State of California must hold a valid Household Mover's Permit by BHGS," said BHGS Assistant Director/Deputy Bureau Chief Tonya Corcoran. "Moving in itself can be stressful and consumers can avoid further complications by making plans and checking a mover's permit well in advance of a move, before hiring anyone, or signing a contract."

State Bureau's Interstate Operation Nabs Fraudulent Household Movers

2-2-2

Consumers should also know that moving companies must provide a “not-to-exceed” price for all household moves. This is the maximum amount they can charge unless a consumer requests additional services. Those changes must be detailed in a “Change of Order for Moving Services.”

A moving company doing business in California cannot hold or store a consumer's goods and then demand more money or a storage fee without a legitimate “Change of Order for Moving Services” contract.

Consumers Can Protect Themselves and Know their Rights!

BHGS has [moving tips](#) to avoid getting scammed by a deceptive moving company:

- Make your plans, do your research, and check a mover's permit well in advance of your move.
- Hire a licensed, BHGS permitted moving company that you have researched and vetted with various sources. Online reviews and postings are a great way to identify movers with an alarming pattern of problems you want to avoid.
- Check the permit status of all movers you are considering using to ensure they are authorized to operate. It's easy to check and the information is invaluable.
 - [BHGS](#) (moves coming or going out of California)
 - [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration](#) (if traveling across state lines)
- When possible, visit the mover's place of business in person.
- For moves within California, a moving company may provide you with a written estimate only after it has conducted a visual inspection of the items you need moved. Verbal estimates, estimates given over the internet, or estimates given without a visual inspection are illegal and may not be enforceable.
- Be aware that moving brokers who are not movers are required by Federal law to identify themselves as brokers. Moving brokers arrange moving services to be provided by other companies, which is different than speaking directly with a moving service company conducting the move. Again, they must identify themselves as brokers. It's the law.
- A red flag: If a broker or moving company asks for a deposit upfront via cash or mobile money transfer apps, this could be an indication you need to ask more questions. Get clarification about whether you are speaking to a broker or mover, make sure you know who is taking possession of your

State Bureau's Interstate Operation Nabs Fraudulent Household Movers

3-3-3

belongings, and ask for documentation to show what services you are getting for what you are paying.

- Never allow a mover to make a verbal agreement with you. Always obtain a contract and read through it carefully before signing it.
- Do not allow a mover to place any of your items onto the truck until they give you the contract. Make sure nothing has changed according to what you agreed and that the "not-to-exceed" price is on the contract before you sign it.
- If you change the terms of service by adding items to be moved or changing moving dates after the contract has been signed, your final cost may change, and a Change of Order for Services must be completed.
- If your mover is traveling across state lines, a good resource to check permit status and get information about consumer rights is the [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration](#).

If you discover a mover is operating in California without a license or valid permit, you can file a complaint online at www.bhgs.dca.ca.gov or call (916) 999-2041.

For more information, visit the BHGS household movers information page at <https://bhgs.dca.ca.gov/consumers/movers.shtml>.

#