

HOUSEHOLD GOODS TRANSPORTATION

The Michigan State Police Motor Carrier Division and the USDOT Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) are concerned about consumers defrauded by unscrupulous household good carriers.

The USDOT FMCSA has issued an interim final rule establishes parameters of fair dealing for household good carriers and provides a reasonable level of protection for consumers. The Michigan State Police Motor Carrier Division will have to seek legislation to enforce these regulations.

The federal rulemaking only applies to commercial transportation that crosses state or national borders. Some of the requirements of the rulemaking are:

- The carrier must provide a written binding or non-binding estimate.
- The carrier must have an arbitration program for individual shippers.
- The carrier must deliver goods on agreed upon dates.
- The carrier must publish truthful advertisements containing their name and USDOT number.
- The carrier must weigh non-binding shipments.
- A binding estimate guarantees the total cost of the move based on the quantities and services shown on the estimate.
- A non-binding estimate is not binding on the moving company and final charges are based upon the actual weight of the individual consumer's shipment and the tariff provisions in effect.
- The carrier is limited to demanding prior to delivery 100% of a binding estimate or 110% of a non-binding estimate at the time of delivery. The consumer must be informed before any additional services not on the estimate are performed. Consumers must sign a written attachment to the contract if they agree to pay additional service charges.

What documents should Consumers ask for?

Household good carriers are required to provide the following documents to prospective consumers:

- A concise and accurate written estimate of charges.
- A summary of the carrier's arbitration program.
- The carrier's customer complaint and inquiry handling procedure.
- The publication, "Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move."
- The carrier's tariff, which contains rates, rules, regulations, classifications, or other provisions that allow consumers to determine exact costs and services applicable to their shipment.

References

Interstate Transportation: USDOT has a number of documents, including the new rulemaking, on their web site at <http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/factsfigs/moving.htm>. For enforcement of these regulations on interstate carriers, contact the USDOT at 888-368-7238 or file an electronic consumer complaint form at www.1-888-dot-saft.com. For intrastate transportation questions or enforcement, contact the Michigan State Police Motor Carrier Division at 517-336-6195. The Michigan State Police does not have the authority to enforce the new rulemaking.