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Common Moving Fraud Schemes

With kids off school, warm weather and more daylight, it's no wonder summer is peak moving season. With millions of Americans making household moves this summer, the risk of moving company scams increases.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has a team of safety investigators working to crack down on fraudulent household goods movers and brokers. As these investigators work to protect American consumers, they uncover astonishing moving fraud scams.

An Investigator's Most Memorable Case

One safety investigator discovered a paroled convict that accumulated multiple U.S. Department of Transportation numbers to operate as an interlining agent. The individual would pick up household goods from carriers and transport those goods to a storage facility owned by a family member.

The individual would unload these household goods at the storage facility, inventory them, and then sell them. An FMCSA investigation exposed this moving fraud, which ultimately landed the individual back in prison with additional charges related to the moving scam. At the time of his arrest, the public storage facility was 80% filled with stolen household goods.

Examples of Common Moving Scams

While this was an investigator's most memorable case, it is a large-scale example of a common scam uncovered by moving fraud investigations. The scam involves carriers that store household goods during transit and steal a few items of value while those goods are in storage.

A common example is a "missing" television that may cost as much as \$3,000 at purchase, stolen by the carrier in transit. With the standard 60 cents a pound insurance and the television weighing 40 pounds, the carrier is only responsible for paying out \$24. The carrier could then sell the stolen television for a profit.

Other moving scams involve holding household goods hostage and forcing an individual to pay additional fees to release those goods. FMCSA investigators have seen everything from necessary medical equipment to ashes of loved ones held hostage.

FMCSA Enforcement Actions

Unfortunately, moving scams have become more common over the past several years. That's why FMCSA continued [Operation Protect Your Move](#) this year, an enforcement initiative to tackle the issue of scam household goods movers and brokers.

The 2023 Operation Protect Your Move resulted in the discovery of more than 1,000 violations of FMCSA regulations and focused on addressing consumer complaints. This year's operation is targeting movers and brokers across the country with the highest numbers of consumer complaints.

What to Do If Moving Companies Steal Your Stuff

The first step is to try resolving any dispute with the moving company or broker. Check to see if you have coverage. Under Federal law, interstate movers must offer two different [liability options](#) referred to as valuation coverage: full value protection and released value. You may also be insured under your renter's or homeowner's policy.

If you feel you've been a victim of fraud, you can file a complaint with the Better Business Bureau, state or federal authorities. Each state has an [agency appointed to handle in-state moving scams](#) and complaints. [Contact the FMCSA](#) to report scams involving a move across state lines.

How to Protect Your Move

FMCSA also has a [Protect Your Move](#) education campaign, raising awareness of household goods moving scams during peak moving season and throughout the year. The Protect Your Move campaign includes free resources to help consumers plan their moves and tips to avoid common moving company scams. If you are planning a move, be sure to visit [ProtectYourMove.gov](#).