



Preparing early for a PCS move can ease the process and avoid delays. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army)

Toolkit: Military Moves

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About every two to three years, Soldiers are uprooted from their current duty station and head to another one, sometimes overseas.

To help ease the process, the U.S. Army Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, headquartered at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., oversees moves for service members throughout the Department of Defense.

Command Sgt. Maj. Cedric Thomas, command sergeant major of SDDC, said the command works to contract out individual Soldiers' permanent change of station moves.

"We set up the contract to get the carriers to go out and move the Soldiers' household goods," Thomas said. "The contractors will do the packing and the loading and will deliver to the location."

When Soldiers receive orders to move, they should link up with the transportation office or visit the Move.

mil website, Thomas said. The peak season for all military moves is from May to August. During this time, it is critical that Soldiers who receive PCS orders visit the website or their transportation office promptly to start coordinating their moves.

"As soon as they receive PCS orders, they need to request a pickup and delivery date as soon as possible," Thomas said. "It will give them a better chance of getting the dates they want. They can't wait until the last minute. If they wait until the last minute, there's a good chance they won't get the dates they want, and they'll have to accept what's available. If you wait until the last minute, your stuff may be four weeks behind you, especially if you're going overseas."

A typical move coordinated with SDDC can last from a couple of days to two months, depending on whether the move is overseas or during the peak season, Thomas said.

Though early planners tend to get the dates they request, all Soldiers need to be flexible with their move dates and should list alternate dates. Soldiers should also create a personal calendar — a sample is available on Move.mil — and compile phone numbers and a household goods checklist to further assist the move.

If Soldiers are unavailable during their move dates, they need to arrange for the proper paperwork — including a power of attorney — so that a representative, their spouse for example, may act on their behalf with the moving contractors.

The Move.mil website also has a calculator to help Soldiers figure out how much their household items and furnishing might weigh. Weight restrictions are in place and are based on a Soldier's grade.

The Move.mil website provides training that NCOs can use to become familiar with the moving process. The information can help NCOs and their junior Soldiers as they PCS.

"NCOs have to understand the move process to better help their troops," Thomas said.

Moving tips

Follow these tips to ensure a smooth process during the peak moving season (May through August):

- Before you begin the moving process, create a personal move calendar with checklists, phone lists, to-do lists and links.
- Your installation's transportation office or personal property shipping office is your primary point of contact for customer service.
- Once you get PCS orders, immediately start the moving process for a better chance to lock in your preferred pickup and delivery dates.
- Requested pickup and delivery dates are not confirmed until coordinated with your contracted transportation service provider.
- Pack, pickup and delivery dates are scheduled on weekdays during which you or your designated representative must be available between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.
- A quick method for estimating the weight of your items is to calculate 1,000 pounds per room. A more detailed weight-estimating tool can be found at http://www.move.mil/dod/before_you_begin/weight_allowance.cfm.

- You can request a free re-weigh of your personal property shipment if it is near or over your weight entitlement, which is determined by your pay grade.

For additional information, visit Move.mil.

Tips for packing up your house

- Use a digital camera to take photos or video of your belongings to record their condition and appearance, especially that of expensive items such as electronics.
- Follow weight allowances. These are based on rank and vary depending on whether dependents are accompanying you. Allowances for enlisted personnel range from 5,000 pounds for a private without dependents to 15,000 pounds for a sergeant major with dependents. Typically, a minimum of \$100 is charged for being over your weight allowance.
- Disconnect, empty and clean all appliances and electronic components.
- Dispose of worn-out or unneeded items before the move to avoid wasteful packing and moving expenses.
- Special rules exist for shipping professional books and gear, firearms, alcohol, motorcycles and boats. Visit the Move.mil website for more information.
- SDDC will not ship the following as part of your household goods:
 - Personal baggage.
 - Automobiles, airplanes, mobile homes, camper trailers, horse trailers and farming equipment.
 - Live animals.
 - Building materials.
 - Privately owned live ammunition.
 - Hazardous articles such as explosives, poisons or propane gas tanks.
- Check the inventory to ensure it is accurate and complete before you sign it. A good inventory shows in detail what you shipped and what condition it was in. Avoid generic descriptions ("ceramics") and be more descriptive ("Lladros") when necessary.
- Do not argue with the transportation service provider's representative. If you have a problem, contact the transportation office immediately. ■

Source: Move.mil→



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