

Preparing for a Military Move



Each year, thousands of military families pack up and move across the country to a new duty station. Even more servicemembers are given orders to temporarily relocate for a period of weeks or months. These orders come regularly and are, for the most part, expected. That said, a move can still shake up your routine. With a little planning, you can become a PCS pro.

There are two types of orders that a servicemember may receive:

- **PCS:** A permanent change of station lasting for at least 20 weeks, but typically lasting between two and four years. Dependents typically accompany a servicemember on PCS moves.
- **TDY:** A temporary duty assignment that takes a servicemember away from a duty station for a period of time. Dependents may not need to or be able to accompany a servicemember on TDY moves.

Furthermore, moves may be either:

- **CONUS:** Within the continental United States, or
- **OCONUS:** Outside of the continental United States.

Once you know where you are going and for how long, you need to determine your method of moving. There are several options, but at its basest, your move comes down to having the military do it for you or doing it yourself.

If you select a household goods move, the government will schedule and pay for a moving company to pack and transport your belongings to your new duty station. It is a relatively hands-off way to move, with little coordination required beyond ensuring that you keep with you the items you will need while you are in transition.

On the other hand, if you choose a personally procured move, you will move your belongings on your own using a method of your choosing; the government will reimburse you the cost of an equivalent household goods move. Personally procured moves offer you the benefit of organizing your own move, knowing when all your goods will arrive in your new location, and having control – but they may come with added stress.

Note: A personally procured move was previously called a DITY move or do-it-yourself move.

Depending on your orders, you may also be authorized one of the following:

- **Unaccompanied Baggage:** A portion of your weight allowance may be shipped to your new location at an expedited rate so as to arrive before the majority of your household goods.
- **Privately Owned Vehicle:** The government may pay to ship your personal vehicle to your new location or pay to store it for the duration of your stay. This typically applies to OCONUS moves; if you are moving within the United States, you may be reimbursed for gas, mileage, and tolls encountered along your drive.
- **Non-Temporary Storage:** Storage of your belongings during your move in lieu of shipping them to your new duty station.

When you receive orders to move, you are given a moving allowance. This allowance is the maximum weight of authorized household goods. It is determined by your rank, whether or not you have dependents, and your move type (e.g., CONUS vs. OCONUS). If you exceed your moving allowance, you are liable for the additional charges.

- When you PCS, you are typically allowed a full household goods move.
- When you are assigned TDY, you may only be allowed a partial household goods move.

Note that while almost all household goods are permissible to move, consumable items are not able to be moved unless you are assigned to a remote location – and then they must be packed and weighed separately. Alcoholic beverages are permissible, subject to customs and border patrol laws, but you may be required to pay an import tax. Firearms may also be transported, subject to customs and border patrol laws, and must be declared.

The Transportation Office can answer any questions you have about permissible items and weight allowances and United States Transportation Command's [Weight Estimator](#) can help you estimate the weight of your household goods to ensure you stay within your limit. Moves are typically scheduled online through the Defense Personal Property System (DPS) or in person at your local Transportation Office.

Moving Tips

- Create an inventory of your belongings, including photos of items showing their condition. If you have receipts for high-priced items, include their costs in your inventory.
- Stay within your weight allowance; donate or throw away items that you no longer need.



- Create a [folder of important documents](#) that should stay with you at all times, including orders and moving documents, medical and school records, marriage certificates, wills and powers of attorney, birth certificates, passports, car titles, etc.
- Create a "do not pack" area. Store things there that you will move yourself and that you don't want movers to handle (e.g., your important documents folder, prescription medications, jewelry, keys, phones and chargers, and moving necessities).
- Clean out the fridge and freezer and avoid too much grocery shopping in the days leading up to your move; movers will not handle or transport perishable goods.
- If using movers, once they arrive at your new home, read their inventory sheet in detail and cross reference it with the inventory sheet you kept when packing. Once it's signed, it may be harder to file claims for missing or damaged goods.
- Set up mail forwarding through the U.S. Postal Service.
- Update your address with financial institutions, the DMV, e-commerce sites, and other companies that may need or use your physical address. If you use the U.S. Postal Service's National Change of Address program, follow up with these companies to confirm your address change.

Moving is a big life change, and it signals a need to evaluate your life insurance. If you are selling or purchasing a home as a result of your move or moving as a result of separating from the military, your coverage needs may change. Our representatives can help ensure you have enough insurance to protect your family and their way of life. Give us a call at [800-628-6011](tel:800-628-6011) or [get a quote today](#).