

## **CANADIAN RELOCATION TIPS FOR "DO IT YOURSELF MOVERS"**

Most people are familiar with the common rental van. These can be found at many different locations, such as service stations, and equipment rental stores. They are ideal for very small moves that can be easily accomplished in one day.

A do-it-yourself move means just that-you must buy or acquire your own packing materials, and arrange for a crew of people to load and unload the truck.

Successful do-it-yourself moves are those moves where the load is small and manageable, and where the distance between origin and destination are modest.

Doing it yourself when there are large amounts of furniture, or more valuable possessions, are less successful because of the greater chance of damage, not to mention the longer amount of time needed to complete the move.

When renting a truck for a do-it-yourself move, you must make sure that the truck is large enough for its intended use, without being too large. Rental agency operators say that the most common problem is people renting vehicles that are too small or large for the job at hand.

Larger trucks may require the driver to possess a special driver's license, depending on the jurisdiction, than is required to operate a car or small truck. You need to check with the jurisdictions the truck will be operating through-not just the requirements at origin and destination.

You also need to be sure that you know how to drive the truck that you rent. Some companies offer units with power steering and brakes, other do not. An automatic transmission may or may not be available. Remember, these are real trucks-not modified cars. They handle differently than a car. They have large blind spots, and proper mirror use is mandatory for safe operation. They are top heavy and must be driven slower, and braking distances are longer. The driver must be careful when changing lanes and be aware of overhangs and other obstructions that don't pose problems to ordinary cars. Backing can be a particular problem.

All rental trucks are not created equally. Truck bodies are built for specific purposes, and may look alike to the untrained eye. You need to make sure that you rent a truck specifically designed for household moving. This means that the truck is equipped with an inclined "walk-board" that allows you to carry items into the truck, rather than having to lift items into and off of the truck. The truck should have at least one side door into the cargo compartment to allow loading and unloading for instances (such as parallel parking on a city street) where rear access is impossible.

The floor of the cargo compartment should be hardwood, and clean, free of stones and other debris. This provides a surface similar to a home floor and helps protect your furniture and other possessions. The walls of the cargo compartment need to be equipped with provisions to "tie-down" the load to prevent it from shifting while in transit. A shifting load can not just cause damage to your possessions, but could cause an accident as well.

Your rental dealer should be able to supply you with various rental accessories you'll need to complete your move. These include "dollies" upon which you place heavy items to facilitate their movement, furniture pads to protect your possessions while on the truck, straps used to tie down the load (never use elastic "bungee" cables), hand trucks to move refrigerators and other heavy and bulky items, and boxes. These items are necessary for the safe and efficient handling of your move.

Safety should be a primary concern when you do the move yourself. You need to take conscious steps to insure the safety of the people who are helping you move, the safe handling of your possessions, and damage-free originations and deliveries. This means that only physically-fit people should perform the move.

People shouldn't carry more than is comfortable, and you must make sure that passages are free of obstructions that could cause a person to trip, and injure themselves, or the item they're carrying. Persons should be careful to lift items with their legs, not their backs. The truck should be loaded so that heavier items are on the bottom, and so that adjacent items help keep things in place. The load should be strapped in place to prevent load shifting and toppling.

Plenty of cold, non-alcoholic beverages should be available during the move. Save the beer for the after-move celebration. It's a good idea to keep high energy snacks available throughout the move, and a party tray for sandwiches. Heavier meals should be delayed until after the move.

Keep in mind that your auto insurance policy may not cover damage to a rental truck, or accidents. Many auto policies cover a rental car, but not rental trucks. Check with your agent about special coverage, or purchase coverage from the truck rental company. Some rental companies provide coverage that will cover the driver, contents, and the other people involved in an accident. Additional coverage may be available to cover the deductible that applies to damage. This coverage, however, may not cover damage to contents when no vehicular accident occurs, like, for example, load shifting.

Many homeowners or other types of general coverage may not protect your items during the move. You may wish to check with your insurance agent about special coverage to protect you when the other ones are not in force. A common mistake is that people don't reserve a truck in advance. People should reserve approximately one week in advance or may face the possibility that the truck needed may not be available. A deposit normally needs to be made with the reservation to assure a truck's availability. Allow enough time for the rental company to get a truck to your dealer from their central pool of vehicles. Many rental companies do not shuttle trucks on the weekend.

An affordable alternative to some of the do-it-yourself problems is to take advantage of a hybrid service that some professional movers offer. Offered under various names, these services provide transportation only—you pack the boxes and load the truck.