

Date Received: January 28, 1998

Docket No.: TV-971477

Company: Amends WAC 480-12, Relating to Household Goods Movers

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STATE OF WASH.
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To: UTC--Kim Dobyms
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RE: Docket No. TV-971477

Ms. Dobyms--

I would like the following statement read during the rulemaking session Jan. 29, 1998 and anytime thereafter as well:

" My family moved from Ridgefield, WA to Ridgefield, WA--approximately 10 miles, last August 1997. We used a company we found in the phone book under Allied Van Lines. The name of the company is Blue Bird Transfer. Imagine our shock and outrage when we received an invoice after our move for 80% over the written estimate!

I took it upon myself to uncover the reasons for this discrepancy. I contacted Blue Bird Transfer, the UTC, Attorney General's Office, Washington State Movers Conference, Allied Van Lines Consumer Affairs (never a reply), Better Business Bureau, national investigative news programs, and finally State Rep. John Pennington. For a long time, Pennington was the only one who would listen to our story. Then Theresa Obrinski at the UTC seemed sympathetic.

I finally discovered that Blue Bird had underbid the move! The sales person had written a low estimate. As a consumer, I rely on the moving company's salesperson to give a reasonable and professional estimate. I realize that estimates are educated guesses of the charges. But we were billed 80% more! By the way, our household contents did not change in the time between the estimate and the moving day. (All documents to support my claims are in the public record.)

Then I found out that our current UTC and state laws protect this outrageous practice!

I spent many, many hours of my own personal time to fight this illogical situation.

In summary: Rules and laws must be changed so that the moving company must give an estimate that does not exceed 10%--a reasonable margin for error. Logical. In our case, the moving company did not advise us upon arrival on the moving day that our move was going to be so much more than

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the estimated amount. The move was completed without a word from them. In essence, our right to change our minds was removed from us--all this without our knowledge!!

The moving industry is fighting changes in the state laws and in the UTC rules. What are they afraid of? Consumers generally do not wish to cheat businesses--they just expect all the facts of services, products, and charges to be revealed so that an educated decision can be made. Why is the moving industry afraid of something so fundamental and logical? Why does our UTC and our state lawmakers allow consumers to remain in the dark?

Most people use a moving company only once or twice in their lifetimes. When they discover they were cheated they may just let it go. Or they do not know where to go for help. They may not have the time. (My investigation was like a second job for me) Some consumers of moving services turn the bill over to their employer for payment--and sometimes employers will pay unfair charges without taking the time to question them. Well, I have had two horrendous experiences with moving companies--one was an interstate move and one was intrastate-- the one I am referencing in this statement. My family will never again use a moving company and we will always spread the word to anyone that will listen: Watch out-- because your state laws and your state agencies will not protect you in the event of a dishonest move."