

Date Received: February 27, 1998

Docket No.: TV-971477

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

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Please **PRINT** the following information

Name S & M MOVING SYSTEMS / JIM CONNORS, GENERAL MANAGER

Mailing Address P.O. BOX 39800

City, State LAKEWOOD, WA

Zip Code 98499

Daytime Phone Number (253) 588-9233
(Please provide your area code.)

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Comment Form

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

*WAC 480-12
Docket TV-971477
January 29, 1998*

If you would prefer to share your comments with the Commission in writing please fill out this comment form and your comments will be considered and added to the formal record.

BINDING ESTIMATES – if we move in this direction, you might as well deregulate pricing. This is a Bid. The downside will be an automatic slide in service to the customer.

TRAINING VERSUS INEXPERIENCE -- As a United Van Lines agent, we are a full service agency. Our people must have 22 - 25 hours of classroom preparation for packing and the same for loading plus 200 hours in the field before certification. They are uniformed and follow all regulations. Free entry would allow anyone to pass themselves off as a mover. Enforcement, even of the minimum fit, willing, and able will be a tough order to fill.

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TOTAL P.02

TC - 971477



Alexander's Moving & Storage

3400 N.E. Columbia Blvd., Portland, OR 97211 • 503-288-7321 • 800-547-7703 • FAX: 503-288-4414

February 24, 1998

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FEB 26 1998

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Ms. Pat Dutton, Program Development
Transportation
WUTC
P.O. Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

The forerunner of our company was established in California in 1953 to provide a full service moving company, which exceeds our customers expectations and the standards of the industry. Our company, which began service in Washington in 1987, has provided what is expected, and in addition, has trained and employed a cadre of experienced packers, movers, helpers and the support staff necessary to give our customers a first-class move at a reasonable cost.

The pricing schedule we have had in the Washington intra-state market has supported our efforts. We believe predatory pricing cannot provide service such as we and our honorable competitors have to offer. Cut-rate movers will make our industry a mockery of what it is today, when they steal our customers with promises that cannot be kept and with trucks and personnel that cannot match ours, simply because of lesser resources.

Our major marketing thrust has been to those companies who hire and employ skilled, highly paid persons who make a valuable contribution to Washington State. Our customers remain residents for many years, contributing their skills and their taxes to the benefit of all Washingtonians.

In closing, the management of Alexander's Moving & Storage pleads for your close inspection of any changes in your present system of regulation that would endanger the customers. By forcing drastic changes in the operations of the entities providing planning, transportation, storage, final delivery, and if necessary, claims settlement; the workable and fair moving industry now existing in your state will disappear if irresponsible and cut rate "fit, willing, and able" organizations take our place without strict enforcement on your part.

Sincerely,

Garry Lynch
Vice President/General Manager

Cc: Jim Tutton/Washington Movers Conference

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<http://www.alexanders-moving.com>





JOE HARRISON
President

February 26, 1998

Paul Curl, Acting Secretary
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr. S.W.
P.O. Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7250

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RE: Household Goods Rulemaking Docket No. TV-971477

Dear Mr. Curl:

The American Moving and Storage Association (AMSA) is the national trade association representing the household goods moving industry. AMSA has over 3,000 members including international and national van lines with agency networks, independent national and regional van lines, and local agents affiliated with a van line network. AMSA members provide household goods moves for commercial clients, individual shippers, government employees, and military service members on both an interstate and intrastate basis. For this reason, AMSA felt it appropriate to respond to the proposed Household Goods Rulemaking, Docket No. TV-971477.

The systems of statutory requirements and regulations imposed by individual states and the federal government reflect a two-fold goal: to provide stability to the local market and to protect the consumer. As you are aware, Congress preempted states from regulating "rates, routes, and services" of the motor freight industry. (See generally Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization, P.L. 103-305.) At that time, Congress decided to not preempt states from regulating household goods movers. Congress had further opportunities to eliminate or seriously alter the regulation of the moving industry during the deliberations of the sunset of the Interstate Commerce Commission (P.L. 104-88) and again chose to continue the existing system of statutory and regulatory requirements for household goods movers, both on an intrastate and interstate basis.

In both of these instances it was an overriding concern for the consumer and the need to continue an efficient and financially viable industry moving network to provide services to the public which convinced Congress to continue the current system. This country's economic strength depends on a mobile workforce. This necessitates individuals moving from small towns to large metropolitan areas and from large metropolitan areas to suburban communities. Unlike motor carriers of freight, movers are not tendered shipments on a regular route basis, but must rely on a network of carriers and agents to provide service to customers from anywhere to anywhere, seven days a week. For this reason, among others, the van line network was established. However, not all movers operate within a van line network and must depend on relationships developed over the years.

The local moving companies in the state of Washington are part of these established relationships and network. Whether participating in a van line system or not they provide the local, statewide link to other states and communities. It is those movers that allow businesses and individuals to relocate in the state without experiencing a moving expense that is out of proportion for the services delivered. Moving a household is in reality a string of services: packing, loading, servicing appliances, driving a truck, storage, delivering, and unpacking. Without the local moving company, movers at origin or destination would have to depend on companies in metropolitan areas of the state or out-of-state movers to provide these local services. This would result in unnecessary added expense to the cost of the consumer's move. The system of regulations in place in Washington fosters a strong local market.

The other goal of the state's regulatory system must be to provide consumer protection to individuals seeking to relocate. An important element of this consumer protection is the continuation of tariff publication requirements. Absent tariffs and government oversight of the rates and charges and rules and regulations set forth in carrier tariffs, the terms and conditions applicable to the transportation of household goods will evolve into a contract (bill of lading) process with the contract terms and conditions developed predominately by movers. Bills of lading will become massive, complicated documents allowing for exceptions and conditions for pricing and services. Rules which are intended to protect consumers will become more difficult to administer, monitor and audit for reasonableness and fairness to the consumer.

For example, the current system in Washington state insures that consumers are protected from movers substantially increasing the price of a move and holding goods "hostage" if payment can not be made. Currently carriers operating in intrastate commerce in Washington must acknowledge and comply with the tariff requirement which permits carriers to collect only 10% more than the estimate, if the charges exceed the estimate, at time of delivery. Thereafter, the shipper and carrier can dispute the remainder of the bill. A similar rule exists in interstate commerce. This rule eliminates a common practice in many deregulated states whereby carriers will demand far in excess of the estimate and will place goods in storage until such time as the shipper can pay the entire amount. Without a tariff requirement, consumers will be subjected to varying pricing practices by movers and the state will find it difficult to police, at the request of a consumer, the 10% requirement because without recourse to a public tariff of prices, the initial basis of an estimate and the final charges may be somewhat illusive. This same analysis is true of valuation (insurance) and other important consumer practices which are clearly set forth in a given mover's tariff. It is important to insure that all consumers have similar rights and protections. Without these common practices set forth in the carrier's tariff, the state will be unable to assert its rights to adequately protect the relocating citizens of Washington.

AMSA applauds your efforts to update the tariff particularly with easier to understand terms for the non-transportation proficient user. Yet AMSA would encourage the state to continue the requirement for mover tariffs. States without a tariff structure have often found it difficult, if not impossible, to monitor all the intrastate movers. States considering deregulation should look to the experience of Florida. The State of

Florida is deregulated, but has experienced significant problems with specific movers, including complaints regarding estimating practices. Most of these problems are mitigated as a result of a mandated tariff that provides a common pricing mechanism with common consumer protection rules. The relocating citizens of Florida have little or no recourse when moving problems manifest themselves. This is why certain counties in Florida have promulgated their own household goods carrier regulatory system.

AMSA would also encourage the state to use the Rand McNally mileage guide for use in the state. This system of accurate mileages that can be used on a statewide basis is of great benefit to the state and its citizens. Without a mileage guide, rates, quoted by a carrier based on a specific distance between two points could be assessed by any number of methods, viz: (1) odometer readings; (2) hubmeter readings; (3) the route preferred by the carrier's driver; (4) the route preferred by the carrier's dispatcher; (5) the fastest but not the shortest highway route; etc. Shippers are entitled to reasonable advance notice of the method employed by motor carriers to determine accurate highway mileages.

I hope these comments are of assistance to you as you review your system of regulations for the state. I will be happy to answer any specific questions you may have.

AMERICAN MOVING AND STORAGE
ASSOCIATION



Joe Harrison
President

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City, State LAKWOOD, WA

Zip Code 98499

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