

TV-991559

SNORING PROBLEM ZZZ

Seattle University
Albers School of Business and Economics

Ad Info

seattletimes.com **Classified Ads** **Yellow Pages** [Contact Us](#) [Search Archives](#)

◀ **Lifestyles**

Sunday, April 23, 2000, 01:36 p.m. Pacific



Shelby Gilje / Times Staff Columnist

After a moving series, we have some suggestions for the WUTC



Shelby Gilje

I suppose you memorized all the rules and regs for movers from last week's Times Troubleshooter consumer-price survey, "All the Right Moves."

No? Honestly, I can't blame you. Moving is a complex transaction with a vocabulary all its own. And it's a transaction most of us complete fewer than a dozen times in a lifetime, so it's not frequent enough to know the rules well.

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission set up new rules for in-state movers in January 1999. Now the commission is pondering some changes.

And after working on the price survey with several consumers who actually are moving, Troubleshooter researcher Cheryl Morningstar and I have some suggestions for the commission.

Require moving companies to use specific formats for estimates, making it easier for consumers to compare bids.

RMD

The WUTC requires that certain items be listed on an estimate, but does not require a specific format. It should. And it should require the date of the estimate be recorded on the form.

The commission also should monitor language on the estimate to be certain it notifies consumers that they can be charged up to 25 percent more for a "short" move - a move less than 35 miles within the state.

Ditto for "long" in-state moves - those more than 35 miles. The consumer can be charged up to 115 percent of the estimate.

Under the term "Important Notice" on estimates, movers are supposed to disclose in writing the extra percentages consumers could be required to pay for long and short in-state moves. We didn't see that disclosure in the required box on any form.

For that matter, how is a consumer to know the distinction between a "long" or "short" move? Spell it out on the form, we say.

Also required is a statement telling the consumer that if additional services are requested after the written estimate, a moving company must prepare a supplemental estimate to reflect added costs. We didn't see that on estimates, either.

It would be helpful, too, for estimate forms to explain the concept of "valuation" or extra protection, which you must purchase lest you want your possessions valued at 60 cents per pound per item. We saw only one form that explained the concept.

Many movers appear to be using estimate forms appropriate for interstate moves, where there are no caps on what consumers may be required to pay to avoid having their possessions held hostage. But the verbiage under "Important Notice" certainly does not meet what state law requires for intrastate moves.

And, because the law says movers should provide a copy of the tariffs if consumers request it, the WUTC needs to remind

moving companies that's the rule.

Since last fall, the WUTC and the moving industry have been negotiating over tariffs, among other items in the new law. As a result, the moving industry has dropped a lawsuit it brought against the commission.

The WUTC adopted new rules for movers in January 1999. But movers said some aspects of the rules were unfair. For example, the commission had a single rate movers could charge, but allowed them to charge 15 percent above or 35 percent below. The rate was set in 1993, leaving no flexibility for price increases as the economy changes.

Now the commission has proposed that rate be adjusted periodically according to a price index tied to the Gross Domestic Product.

Under this proposal, moving companies could charge a range of prices from a maximum of 20 percent above the old rate to a minimum of 40 percent below the maximum.

There's another important change from the industry's view. The 1999 law was written to encourage competition, but mainstream movers felt it allowed folks into the industry who may not have followed all the rules, such as being current in payment of taxes, and abiding by the rules of other agencies, including the state Department of Labor and Industries.

So the proposal has been written to reflect those concerns.

Additionally, the proposal calls for tweaking the rules to allow the WUTC staff to revise the text of "Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Moving Company Customer," making it more friendly without requiring a change in the law.

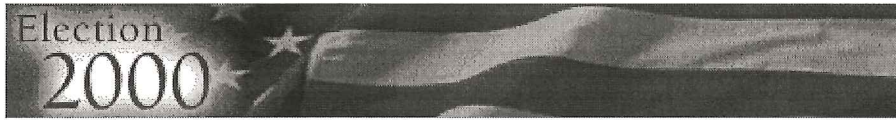
You can read more about the proposed changes on the agency's Web site, <http://www.wutc.wa.gov> .

You can comment on the proposed rules through May 10 by writing to the WUTC, P.O. Box 47250, Olympia, WA 98504-7250, and refer to docket No. TV-991559. Or call the WUTC at 888-606-9566 or 800-562-6150.

Got a consumer problem? Write to Times Troubleshooter,

P.O. Box 70, Seattle, WA 98111. Phone, 206-464-2262, fax
206-382-8873, or e-mail troubleshooter@seattletimes.com.


Copyright © 2000 The Seattle Times Company



[[seattletimes.com home](#)]

[[Classified Ads](#) | [Yellow Pages](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Search Archives](#)]

Copyright © 2000 The Seattle Times Company

 [Back to Top](#)