

Planning an International Move

How to Begin:

Many of the steps for preplanning an international move are similar to those of a domestic move. Do not get quotes over the internet, make sure the company is willing to come out to your home for a visual survey and that they provide you with International Relocation Brochures. Special allowances must be made, however for the added length of time in transit, the necessary paperwork and the various regulations existing in the United States and foreign countries.

The first step is the selection of an experienced forwarder who has worldwide capabilities and can arrange moves to and from the United States, as well as inter-country moves. Such a forwarder handles the entire process of the move from the shipper's residence at origin to the shipper's residence at destination, or "door-to-door" service. Other forwarders may only be capable of delivering your goods from one port to another port in the destination country. You must then arrange pick up of your goods from that port to new residence. By using a "door-to-door" forwarder you will have only one invoice, offering complete responsibility from point of origin to point of destination. Most major domestic household good carriers offer complete forwarder service. Quotes unless otherwise dictated include "door to door", packing and unpacking.

What to look for in an International Mover:

Most major domestic household good carriers have their own International Divisions that will work along with the agent you selected in pricing and selection of a destination agent.

Although most forwarders won't meet all of these criteria, here are five important things to look for in an experienced forwarder.

1. The forwarder has been in business for at least 10 years
2. The forwarder is a FIDI Member - www.fidi.com
3. RIM (Registered International Mover) Certification. RIM Certification is an AMSA program, and has two major objectives. First it provides customers with a standardized, independent means of differentiating and selecting a qualified moving company operating anywhere in the world. Second, the program raises the overall level of professionalism and performances of international moving companies and their personnel. To become RIM Certified you must pass an initial examination and then met RIM standards for equipment and facilities to handle international household goods shipments, verified by on-site inspections. To remain certified management and personnel, within three years, must complete a minimum of 15 hours of RIM approved continuing education and training, and the company's facilities and equipment must be subject to re-inspection every three years. To date there are over 142 moving and storage companies that have completed the initial stage of RIM program.
4. OMNI (Overseas Movers Network International)
5. ISO 9002 Certified

Surveys and Estimates:

Cost to overseas destinations is based on weight and (cubic) measurement of the household goods when packed for shipment. It includes air or ocean transportation charges and packing and unpacking services of the carrier's origin and destination agents. Most shipments will be shipped in 20' or 40' containers. It does NOT include charges for storage, servicing of appliances, custom duty, liability coverage or extra pick up or deliver.

International rates are not regulated and can be very competitive.

What Not to move:

Many articles of household goods cannot be shipped internationally and your mover should supply you with this list (plants, foods, flammables). You should also be informed, if known, of custom regulations to identify any boycotted manufactures or materials which are prohibited in the destination country, such as liquor, fire arms or ammunition. You can contact the nearest consular of the destination country and obtain a copy of the latest customs regulations.

Custom duty for importation of automobiles varies from country to country and is sometimes extremely high.

Pets are forbidden in some countries and others may require an entry permit, health and rabies certificates or a quarantine period up to six months or longer at the owners expense.

Packing:

Packing for an overseas move is very different from that of a move within the United States. Everything must be wrapped and arranged inside large waterproof plywood, metal or fiberglass boxes called lift vans or loaded directly into ship containers (20 ft and 40 ft). You should NOT pack your own goods. Due to recent terrorist threats, self-packing is not allowed. The Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 dictates what can and cannot be done on international moves. Professional movers use specially designed cartons that are heavy enough for fragile items. All items not boxed are and should be wrapped in a thick corrugated brown paper. Everything is then fitted into the container. Most movers will pack and load the containers at residence.

Valuation and Claims:

Like packing, placing valuation on international shipments is quite different from placing valuation on a move within the states or a local move. Forwarders limit their liability from \$.10 to \$.60 per pound of weight of each shipping package. A second plan of protection is full coverage, which you can declare full value for the whole shipment or you can "itemized" items you would like protected. The coverage establishes value of an item before shipment. For each item lost or damaged the coverage will (1) pay up to the value established by inventory before shipment, or (2) pay the cost of repairs up to the declared value of the item or (3) replace the item with a like article up to the declared value. Any item claimed as "extremely high value" will require a "Certificate of Authenticity" supporting the declared value.

Required Documents:

Completion of several documents should be completed to avoid complications at destination. Applications for these forms should be made as far as in advance as possible.

Passports, Certificate of Registration, US Export Forms, Visa, Residence and Work Permits, Medical and Immunization Certificates, International Driving Permits, and Marriage Certificate.

Payment:

Most international movers will require payment at completion of load. You can go directly into the office and make payment on site, for the actual weight and services. Once payment is received, your shipment will be released and sent from port of origin. If payment is not made, your goods can sit at port and collect storage cost, at your expense. Most international quotes are good for 30 days. Rates change constantly. If any duties or additional charges are required at destination, you will pay the selected destination agent at that time.