



**Buyer
Beware**

SALMON'S



"BUYER BEWARE" ...WORDS TO LIVE BY

Moving from one residence to another can be a stressful experience. By its very nature, moving disrupts your life. There are many decisions to be made and details to be attended to. For some people it can be an overwhelming experience...especially if the move does not go well!

Given these truisms, it is sometimes surprising how little thought many consumers give to choosing the right mover. All too often, they wait almost until their closing date to even start the process. Others use "lowest price" as their only criteria when deciding who will be entrusted with everything they own!

Unfortunately, consumers who do this often end up regretting their decision. They learn a hard lesson about the difference between "best price versus best value". Newspapers, radio and television stories abound about customers who have had disappointing experiences with movers who did not deliver on their promises.

The media often reports on "moving horror stories". Last year, CTV's "W-5" Program aired an expose on one such company and profiled a number of customers whose moves turned into virtual nightmares. You can read the transcript of the show or view a video at www.ctv.ca. Search for their W5 program archive. Other similar new stories have appeared on CBC Marketplace, NBC Dateline, and CBS News and in local stories all across North America. **When interviewed, most customers admitted that they were partially to blame for not having done their homework before choosing their mover.**

SOME OF THE COMPLAINTS IN THE W5 STORY INCLUDED:

- Final price exceeded quoted price by 40% or more and furniture held for ransom until customer agreed to pay
- Customers spent weeks trying to track whereabouts of their possessions
- Mover misrepresented himself in yellow pages as being a member of a national van line
- Customers advised that there would be no settlement for damaged items even though they had paid an additional premium for cargo protection
- Delivery dates not met – in one instance the customer waited over two months for delivery
- Unable to contact moving company to register complaints (unreturned calls)
- Driver threatened not to deliver goods unless excessive increase in charges paid and brought a Rottweiler dog with this to add to intimidation factor

Unfortunately stories like this are all too common especially when customers do not make an effort to find out if the company trying to obtain their move really is a reputable mover. Today there are far too many shady individuals preying on consumers. They place large ads in the yellow pages or have a fancy website and so consumers assume they must be reputable.

A FEW OF THE THINGS THEY GENERALLY DON'T HAVE ARE:

- Clean, modern trucks and moving equipment
- Trained personnel
- Clean, palletized, secure and pest controlled warehouses
- A track record for good service including legitimate testimonials
- Proper insurance coverage for trucks, warehouse goods and cargo in transit
- A willingness to settle claims and resolve problems to the customer's satisfaction
- Adherence to agreed pickup and delivery schedules
- Appropriate compensation if shipment is late being delivered
- A peer company at the destination location to assist the customer get settled
- An "arms length" arbitrator to help settle problems if solution not reached with mover

These deficiencies are the main reason why these types of companies can offer their services at a very low price. Basically you are not getting much for your money and in many instances you are taking a terrible risk with all of your worldly possessions. This is not to say that a small moving company cannot do a good job. What it does mean is that you should carefully check out the mover's credentials. Don't just accept the word of the salesman or the wording in their advertisements.

Another fact that most customers do not understand is that there is very little in the way of consumer protections laws in Canada or the United States when it comes to moving companies. This is one reason why reputable moving companies choose to affiliate their firms with one of the major national van lines. In Canada there are only five of these organizations. By doing so they become part of a larger, umbrella organization that oversees the quality of services offered by its agents. They ensure that only those companies who meet pre-set standards and remain financially solvent are allowed to be part of the van line. This kind of stability, emphasis on customer satisfaction and overall accountability are part of what you are paying for when you book a move with a van line affiliated agent. This is part of the "value" you receive for your moving dollars.

In the interests of consumer education, Atlas Van Lines (Canada) Ltd. would like to offer the following tips for choosing a good mover. If you have any questions, feel free to call us at 1-800-267-3783, by email to mktg@atlasvanlines.ca or visit our website at www.atlasvanlines.ca.



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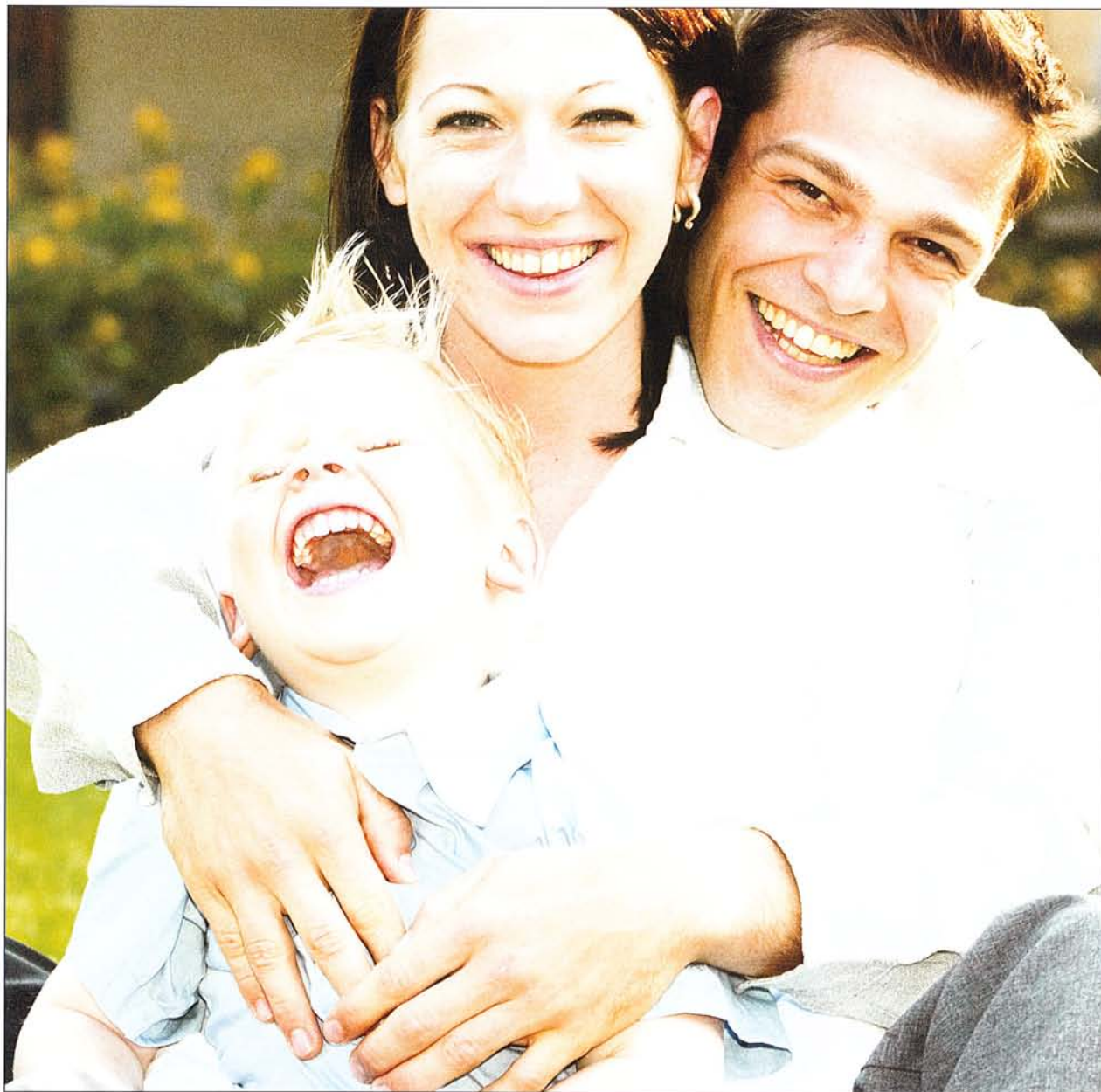
PROTECTIVE GUIDELINES FOR FAMILIES "ON THE MOVE"

- To find the best mover in your area, begin asking family, friends or your realtor for their recommendations
- If you are moving long distance, get your estimates from major van line movers
- Unless you have a very small apartment, insist that a moving consultant come to your home to do a proper survey of what is to be moved
- Ask the moving consultant to clearly explain how your price quote was arrived at so you can do a proper "apples to apples" comparison- get quote in writing
- If you get multiple estimates they should be suspicious of the one that is too low – ask for an explanation, especially if weight differs significantly from other estimates
- Ask for references and check those references
- Visit the mover's place of business to see their equipment, personnel and warehouse
- Ask for an address of a move being done in your area and stop by to view performance
- Most van line affiliated movers do not ask for deposits (may be some exceptions for local moves) – be suspicious of any company who wants prepayment or a large deposit
- Ask how claims will be handled and find out who you would call to have this taken care of
- Ask that mover to provide a committed pickup and delivery schedule in writing
- Ask for the name and telephone number of your destination agent
- Never just book over the internet, insist that a company representative come to your home to do a in-home survey
- Keep a record of your contacts with mover, especially if there are any problems
- Ask for a confirmation letter detailing all of your specific moving arrangements and a copy of the price quotation
- Contact their affiliated van line to ensure the mover is an agent in good standing
- Check with your local Better Business Bureau to see if there are any complaints on file about the mover



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Be a smart consumer. Do your homework well in advance of your moving day. We promise it will make the experience a great deal less stressful which will make life a lot more pleasant for you and your family.



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Consumer Education Rev. Mar. 2006