Avoid excess costs when shipping household goods

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Editor's Note: This is part one of a two-part story.

The process to close out a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Household Goods (HHG) move can often be longer than expected and often Sailors are at risk of receiving a bill many months after the actual move.

There are several aspects of PCS moves that all Navy personnel need to be aware of to help themselves and to help the Navy. Commander Fleet and Industrial Supply Centers (COMFISCS) Rear Adm. Andy Brown is making PCS move support a top command priority.

"Too many Sailors are getting billed for exceeding their authorized weight allowances or making bad decisions; this hurts our Sailors and costs the Navy more to move them," said Brown.

On average, the Navy processes 178,000 PCS orders a year at a total cost of approximately $800 million. Of this, almost $500 million is spent moving household goods, including privately owned vehicles (POVs).

"Every pound we move costs the Navy and adds to the potential for Sailors to pay excess weight charges," said Brown. "And, it could take up to two years from the date of your last move for the bill to reach you." Navy members can perform different types of HHG shipments under most PCS orders such as personally procured "do-it-yourself" moves and government-arranged household goods, unaccompanied baggage, and non-temporary (long term) storage shipments.

For each type, the weight is counted against the maximum weight allowance. Weight allowances are based on a member's rank and number of dependents.

"You will pay excess costs if the combined weight of all shipments made under a specific PCS order exceeds the maximum entitlement for your rank and dependent status," said Brown. "Many factors can contribute to excess costs, such as attempted pickup or delivery charges, exceeding maximum weight allowances or storage periods, shipping excess distances or unauthorized items, or even accessorial services such as packing and crating," said Brown. "Always consult your local Personal Property Office [PPO] before arranging any type of government-funded household goods move."

Personal property warehouseman Kazutoshi Mori stages household goods before an off-base delivery. There are several aspects of PCS moves all Navy personnel need to be aware of to help avoid excess costs when shipping household goods. Photo by Blake Vives

When planning your move, it is important to avoid or minimize excess costs wherever possible.

"Consider donating or discarding unneeded HHG items such as appliances, furniture, housewares, collectibles and building or remodeling supplies. It helps you and it helps the Navy," Brown said.

Brown also recommends discussing storage requirements with a personal property counselor before the move.

"A Navy family might not own a home at the new duty station or have a rental property picked out, so they may need to move into a temporary residence," Brown said. "If all of their household goods can't fit into the temporary residence, the government is not obligated to pay for temporary storage in transit (SIT) beyond 90 days."

COMFISCS comprises more than 7,500 military and civilian logistics professionals, operating as a single cohesive team providing global logistics services from nearly 135 locations worldwide.

Tips on staying within your weight allowance

• Dispose of unwanted articles. Shipping unneeded articles is needlessly expensive; shipping costs vary based on destination, region or country.

• Claim professional books, papers, and equipment (PBP&E), also referred to as pro gear. Declare all PBP&E weight, even if your estimate is within your weight allowance. Check to ensure the weight is reflected on your DD Form 1299 prior to pickup.

• Separate the PBP&E before the Transportation Service Provider (carrier) arrives, as they must mark and weigh the pro gear. Check your inventory form periodically to ensure the carrier annotates PBP&E accurately.

• Request a reweigh if your pre-move survey estimate is more than your maximum allowance. If your shipment is picked up and exceeds your weight allowance, ask the destination PPO to reweigh the shipment. Reweighing the shipment will not cause any increase in excess cost to you.

• Minimize temporary storage in transit (SIT). SIT raises the overall cost of personal property shipments and may increase the total excess cost. If your shipment is overweight, have it delivered within the authorized timeframe, generally within 90 days of arrival at destination.

Proud U.S. civil servant, 20-year career awardee, reflects with pride

Story and photo by Blake Vives,
CFAY Public Affairs

If you are in the military or a federal employee, devoting 20 years of service may be a career goal you would be proud to achieve.

U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka employee Carol Koahou got that feeling of extreme pride in her service to the U.S. Government when she received her 20-year Federal Service Career pin in recognition of her years of dedicated service to the U.S. Government from FISC Commanding Officer Capt. Michael J. Arnold.

According to Koahou, most of her federal career was spent giving various members of different branches of the U.S. military peace of mind. She dedicated herself to ensuring their personal property arrived safely and timely to their new home so they could concentrate on their new job.

"It is an honor and gratifying to receive this award," Koahou said. "Twenty years of government service is a big achievement. I'm grateful to our command [FISC Yokosuka] for giving me the opportunity to help and assist our Navy community during their most stressful time, a permanent change of station (PCS) move."

The accomplishment Koahou is most proud of is consistently delivering excellent customer service, despite working at a variety of locations in Hawaii and Japan. Her duty stations have ranged from Navy bases to Marine and Air Force bases.

"I am very proud that I could provide good customer service to the Navy community here in Yokosuka, Japan and other Personal Property Office (PPO) sites," said Koahou.

Koahou will never forget assisting Sailors during their homeport changes.

FISC Yokosuka employee Carol Koahou, recently received her 20-year Federal Service Career pin from FISC Commanding Officer Captain Michael J. Arnold.

"My most memorable accomplishments are the change of homeports of three carriers and numerous small ships," said Koahou.

Some lessons Koahou has learned during her years as a civil servant include realizing the importance of the personal property office (PPO) and working with the diverse U.S. Civil Service (USCS) workforce.

"I've learned that the Household Goods (HHG) Office plays a great part in service members' quality of life and for us [working at PPO] it's priority," said Koahou. "I have also learned about working with a diverse group of people."

Koahou also said she learned life lessons at her job that she uses in everyday life and will always remember and carry throughout her life.

"I learned not to be sensitive. I learned how to handle issues with diplomacy and not to let pressure affect my health," said Koahou. "I also learned to be responsible enough to accept mistakes and learn from them."

Koahou came to FISC Yokosuka after her husband received orders to Japan. While here she discovered she enjoys many cultural aspects of her new host nation.

"I love eating Japanese food and enjoy shopping and meeting people," said Koahou.

Her most interesting cultural encounters include experiencing the dining etiquette in Japan, a Japanese bath house and a Japanese funeral. In order to see Japan, she recommends new residents of Yokosuka begin their journey by visiting Mt. Fuji, Kamakura and even the Japanese countryside.

Koahou will make traveling a priority after she retires. "I will enjoy my time by travelling everywhere and visiting friends and relatives," she said.

How did Koahou reach her 20-year career service mark so successfully and with a desire to continue working?

"You need to like your job, enjoy what you do, don't be late for work and keep out of trouble," said Koahou.