Avoiding mistakes while moving household goods

By Frank Piacine, NAVSUP Household Goods

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

Moving - it's an accepted fact of life if you are a Sailor or military family member. The moving process can be stressful. This is particularly true the first few times you move. The military has many rules, restrictions and requirements that can be confusing and if you make a mistake it can cost you money out of your paycheck.

So, what are the most common mistakes and how can you avoid them?

The Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) Navy Family Support Household Goods team put their more than 100 years of experience together to develop these simple rules for moving:

• Do not exceed the maximum weight allowance. Service members are limited to a set amount of weight based upon their military rank and dependent status. This limit is set in law by Congress. If members exceed their allowed weight, the Navy will pay the mover on behalf of the member but will then initiate collection action from the member.

"Navy auditors located in Norfolk, Va. review every move; so if someone exceeds the authorized weight allowance, a bill will eventually come their way," said Navy Household Goods Traffic Management Specialist Kermit Horn. "Dispose of worn out and unnecessary items before the move to avoid wasteful packing, moving or storage expenses which increase the cost of the move. If you feel you are close to your authorized weight limit, request a re-weigh of the shipment prior to delivery at destination. The government will pay the lower of the two certified weights and, subsequently, the member will be charged based on the lower weight."

• Do not commit fraud. It may sound harsh but it is a fact of life that some people will always be tempted to try to beat the system. Navy Household Goods Audit Division audits all personally procured moves. Cases of fraud detected by the audit team are reported to the Naval Criminal Investigation Service for action. People making honest claims have nothing to fear.

•Claim professional books, paper and equipment (PBP&E). Every Sailor can claim PBP&E each time they move. This includes professional books and other gear required in the performance of official duties. The weight of PBP&E can be subtracted from the total weight of your move but many Sailors never claim it. If PBP&E is not claimed during counseling, it cannot be claimed after the fact to reduce the weight of the shipment when Sailors exceed their maximum entitlement. "Before the movers arrive, make sure you separate Pro Gear [PBP&E] from the rest of your property so these items may be packed, marked and weighed separately if a small scale is available. If a scale is not available, the mover should ensure the carton size [cubic dimension] is noted on the inventory," advises Navy Household Goods Traffic Management Specialist Warren Bennett.

A recent change to the Joint Federal Travel Regulations (JFTR) added a small weight allowance for a member's spouse's professional equipment. Effective Jan. 12, 2009, military members can claim up to 500 pounds of "Spousal PBP&E" for such professions as doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc., but under no circumstance are items for re-sale allowed. "Before signing your inventory prepared by the mover be sure all of these items are listed as 'PBP&E or Pro Gear' or 'Spouse Pro Gear' and not simply as 'books' or 'miscellaneous,'" said Bennett.

(Left) FISC Yokosuka Personal Property Office Packing Inspector Keiko Ito asks Debra Guerrero, holding 2-year-old daughter Sophia, if her on base pack out is progressing smoothly. Moving can be a busy time for military families, which is one reason the Naval Supply Systems Command Navy Family Support Household Goods team suggests planning ahead and sorting through household goods to ensure unwanted items do not lead to a costly, overweight move.

Photo by Blake Vives

• Do not make a personally procured move (PPM) without proper authorization. Sailors, particularly those thinking about retiring or separating, often decide to move their household too early.

"The problem occurs when they do this before they actually receive orders that authorize a move," said Navy Household Goods Traffic Management Specialist Paul Campbell. "A letter of intent to issue orders is not a legitimate document to conduct a PPM either, unless certain conditions are met and it contains a current valid permanent change of station line of accounting. If in doubt or you would like more detailed information, check it out with the local personal property office before making any transportation commitments."

• Carefully consider the monetary advance amount possible on a PPM or Do-It-Yourself Move.

If you have decided to move yourself, the JFTR authorizes a 60 percent advance payment based on the total "estimated" weight to be shipped (not to exceed the authorized weight limit). It is tempting to provide the household goods counselor an inflated weight figure so you will get a big check but, beware, the "estimated" payment on the DD Form 2278 [Application for Do-It-Yourself Move and Counseling Checklist] is based upon that "estimated" weight. So, if you give a higher weight estimate than you actually move, you may very well end up owing money back.

For more information on personal property moves, contact the U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka Personal Property Office at 243-7587.

FISC Fuel Department exceeds 1,000 safe operational days

By Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

Fueling the fleet can be a tough job but the U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka Fuel Department makes it look easy and safe. After recently surpassing its previous safety record by leaps and bounds, FISC Fuels took time to hold a safety standdown and picnic to reflect upon and celebrate more than 1,000 consecutive incident-free working days.

FISC Yokosuka Commanding Officer Capt. Mike Arnold expressed his pride in the Fuel Department's achievement. "In the face of a very busy summer, this is an accomplishment for which our fuels folks and everyone here at FISC can be justifiably proud," said Arnold. "Safety is a hallmark of our operations."

Fuel Department Director Lt. Cmdr. Matt Holman began the safety standdown at Hakozaki Fuel Terminal with a few remarks to the large, diverse crowd of Japanese master labor contract employees, U.S. civil service and U.S. military employees and their families.

"Whether you are a C700 [FISC Fuels] employee or a loved one, you should be justifiably proud of the enormous contribution your family makes to our two great countries," said Holman. "To put it in perspective, when you compute the amount of fuel moved through Hakozaki and Tsurumi each year per worker, each of us can take credit for more than two million gallons of throughput, which in monetary terms makes each of us worth more than three million or 300 million yen per year. That said, it's all the more impressive that you have accomplished the extraordinary safety record of more than 1,000 days without a lost time injury," said Holman. "We are here today to celebrate that record and to enjoy a much deserved break involving good food and spirited sports competition. But more importantly, we're here to reflect on the work habits and daily vigilance that make such an accomplishment possible."

A diverse crowd of FISC Fuel Department employees and their families gather in front of the Hakozaki Fuel Terminal "safe working days" sign to celebrate achieving a safety record of more than 1,000 days without time lost to injury and reflect on what it will take to continue this positive trend.

Photo by Yohsuke Onda

After the safety stand-down, everyone present gathered to observe the symbolic rollover of the counter of safe days to 1,027 (the actual 1,000 day milestone occurred July 22).

"I hope that all of you are as proud and thankful as I am of the number displayed on this sign, which is more than just a number," said Holman."It's an extraordinary achievement; though you make it look easy and I thank you for that. I believe that is all I need to say because I know an appreciation of safety is a principle that goes beyond any words and I can see your commitment to that principle through your actions every day."