

## Claims Tips to Know, Before You Go

by CPT A.J. Browell

While we all hope and pray that the shipment of our household goods will go off without a hitch, it is important to prepare for a claim – just in case. Setting yourself up for success in any military move requires knowledge and action ahead of time.

In order to have a valid claim, you must demonstrate three things: 1. That you actually owned the items and the items were in a certain condition prior to transfer to the carrier; 2. That you transferred the items to the carrier; and 3. That the carrier caused loss or damage to your items.

There are many ways you can show that you owned the items and the condition of the items prior to shipment. One thing you can do is photograph or film your household goods; high quality photos or videos can prove not only that you owned the items, but also that the items were in good condition (free of scratches/dents, operational, etc.). Additionally, the carrier will list the condition of your items on the “condition at origin” section of your standard inventory. Ensure that any damage listed is in fact present on your items. If you disagree, simply note it on the inventory prior to signing. Armed with photos/videos of your items and any disagreement noted on the inventory, you stand a better chance of demonstrating your items were in good condition prior to shipment.

The key to showing that you transferred items to the carrier is both the regular inventory and the high risk/high value inventory. If you own items that are more expensive, ensure they are specifically listed on the inventory and/or the high risk/high value inventory. With the listing and photos/videos discussed above, you will improve your chances of receiving fair compensation for any lost or damaged items. The carrier will likely tell you that you only need to list items that have a value in excess of \$100 per pound on your high risk/high value inventory. Remember, this is only a threshold. You may list any item that is important to you on this inventory. In my experience, items specifically listed on the high risk/high value inventory are rarely lost or damaged in shipment.

It is presumed that the carrier caused loss or damage to your items if you provide notice to the carrier **within 75 days of delivery**. That said, you should take care to notify the carrier of any obvious loss or damage at delivery on the “Notification of Loss or Damage at Delivery” form, DD Form 1840 (*a.k.a.* “the pink form”), or similar form. Examples of obvious loss or damage include, but are not limited to, a cracked television screen, missing boxes or furniture, moldy boxes, shattered dinner plates, etc. Finally, you must file your claim with the carrier **within nine months of delivery** if you want full replacement value. If you miss that deadline, you can still file your claim against the Government as long as you file it **within two years of delivery**, but we can only pay you depreciated value.

The most common mistake claimants make is failing to adhere to the deadlines. There are a number of causes for this, but the main cause is difficulty using the Defense Personal Property System (DPS) at [www.move.mil](http://www.move.mil) to file notice of loss or damage and to file the claim itself. You should therefore allow yourself sufficient time to work through any problems in DPS so you do not miss the deadlines.

***If you have further questions about these or other claims-related issues, call the Kaiserslautern Claims Office at DSN 483-8855/8856 or Civilian 0631-411-8855/8856, or visit the office, located in Room 112 of the Kaiserslautern Legal Services Center, and consult with our claims experts.***

