

"They Broke It; They Buy It!"

by CPT A.J. Browell

PCS season can be very stressful. This stress is often exacerbated when moving overseas. With so many things occurring all at once (finding a place to live, adapting to a new culture, getting into a new battle rhythm in your new assignment, enrolling your family members into various programs, etc.), it is easy to forget to take the steps necessary to ensure you receive the money to which you are entitled for household goods and unaccompanied baggage damaged during shipment.

Previously, if your belongings were damaged during a military move, you were only compensated based on the depreciated or fair market value of the item. This changed in 2007 when the Department of Defense (DOD) entered into a new contract with transportation service providers (TSPs) which now enables claimants to obtain the full replacement value (FRV) of destroyed or lost items. That is, the TSP is required to replace lost items with a new item, or pay the cost of a new item of the same kind and quality. As this change can mean more money in your pocket, it pays to be fully informed on the process.

First, you must provide notice of loss or damage to the TSP. Obvious loss or damage discovered during delivery must be recorded on the "Notification of Loss/Damage at Delivery" form. Examples of obvious loss or damage are missing boxes, a shattered television, a major gouge running across your dining room table, etc. All other damage must be reported to the TSP within **75 days** of the date of delivery, using the Defense Personal Property System (DPS). Second, you must file your claim with the TSP within **nine months** of delivery, also using DPS.

DPS is a web-based program located within www.move.mil. If you haven't already done so, you can create a DPS account through www.move.mil by providing your personal information. Once registered, you can use DPS to settle claims online directly with your TSP.

U.S. Transportation Command promotes DPS as a centralized, integrated system that is the one-stop source for managing personal property moves. DPS is a sophisticated and valuable resource when it works. However, many claimants report having difficulty accessing DPS; claimants also report difficulty in filing their notice of loss and claims in DPS, even with access.

Your claims office recognizes the difficulties that claimants are experiencing with DPS and stands ready to assist you during every step of the claims process. In fact, all claims offices within the 21st TSC have dedicated computer terminals for accessing DPS, as well as detailed instructions and in-person support on utilizing the program.

If you are unsatisfied with how the TSP is settling your claim, you may transfer your claim, in whole or in part, to your local military claims office after the TSP makes you a settlement offer or 30 days after your claim's submission to the TSP, whichever is sooner, without forfeiting FRV. ***The important thing to remember is to "Come to Claims!"*** Our claims attorneys and claims examiners can explain how the system works, and how the Army may be able to bring more leverage to bear on the TSP than you can as the claimant.

Finally, it is important to note that the TSP has certain rights under its contract with DOD. The TSP has the right to inspect damaged items during the claims adjudication process; the TSP also has the right to take possession of any item for which it has agreed to pay full replacement value or any item it actually replaces. However, items that are hazardous or dangerous to the health or safety of the claimant or the claimant's family (e.g., broken glass and moldy fabric items) may be thrown out. That said, be sure to document those items with photographs to support your claim before disposing of them.

As always, your claims office understands the sometimes challenging nature of the claims process. Claims personnel are standing by to assist every step of the way!

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 and consult with our claims experts.

