

# U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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## Peak summer moving season requires Soldiers, Families to be creative, flexible, patient

### U.S. Army Installation Management Command-Europe Public Affairs Office

**HEIDELBERG, Germany** -- The Army's yearly "summer surge" season for permanent change-of-station moves has dawned, and officials with the Installation Management Command-Europe are expecting a high volume of Soldiers and Families to move during the next few months.



To help ease the burden on those who will be coming or going this summer and ensure "smooth moves," IMCOM-E is offering a variety of tips.

That advice is being provided as the PCS busy season, coupled with the implementation of the new Defense Personal Property System, poses a challenge when scheduling household goods shipments this year, said Vivian McBride-Davis, chief of the IMCOM-E logistics division.

DPS -- implemented worldwide throughout the Department of Defense last November -- is a centralized, integrated system that provides a one-stop source for managing personal property moves. The integrated, centralized, Web-based system for

management of DoD personal property shipments is replacing the Transportation Operational Personal Property Standard System.

DPS is designed to provide the convenience of 24/7 access to personal property shipment information. McBride-Davis said the program serves as "a conduit for a direct relationship between DoD members and transportation service providers throughout the entire moving process."

The intent of DPS, said Charles St. John, chief of the IMCOM-E transportation branch, is to improve the quality of life for servicemembers, civilian employees and families during

household goods movement or relocation. But he cautioned that “there are bugs in the system, resulting in some customers experiencing slow system performance.”

IMCOM-E logistics officials developed work-around solutions while working out the glitches. But St. John stressed that most shipping concerns are not DPS-related. A common misperception among customers is that household goods carrier capacity is unlimited. The truth is that the Army has a limited number of contracted carriers available. Those same carriers also support other services and industry, creating a high demand for household goods transportation shipments in a very tight window.

That means customers must plan well in advance to reduce the chances of disappointment, St. John said.

Another customer concern, said Joe Dunn, a personal property specialist with the IMCOM-E transportation branch, is carriers arriving at a customer's house late or -- on rare occasions -- not showing up at all.

“Although the carrier can show up at a customer’s residence anytime between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. on the scheduled pack-out date,” Dunn said, “if the carrier hasn’t arrived by noon, it’s recommended that customers call the quality control officer to ensure there are no unforeseen delays.”

When scheduling shipment appointments, the installation Personal Property Processing Office provides customers the name and telephone number of the quality control inspector monitoring their move. If a customer is unable to contact the QC inspector, Dunn said it best to contact PPPO.

“The worst thing you can do,” Dunn said, “is to not call to check what is causing the delay. There have been rare occasions when the carrier’s truck broke down. However, the carrier makes every effort to ensure the customer is notified.”

The experts offered a few other tips they say can take much of the headache out of moving:

#### **ORDERS ARE THE KEY**

Orders are an absolute prerequisite. Customers must have their orders in hand before scheduling pickup dates.

#### **BE EARLY**

It's a good idea for customers to contact their servicing transportation office about 45 days before they wish to move. If orders are received less than 45 days prior to the move date, they should visit the transportation office as soon as they are received.

#### **CONFIRM BEFORE BOOKING TRAVEL PLANS**

A confirmed household goods pickup date is a must before making other plans -- customers may not get the pickup date they are expecting, forcing a change in travel

arrangements. Commercial travel offices have been instructed to not issue flight reservations until customers show proof that they have received confirmed pack-out and pickup dates from their transportation offices.

#### BE FLEXIBLE

Customers should be flexible in planning for household goods pickup dates. In addition to requesting a specific date, they should choose some alternate dates and be prepared to accept them. In a normal move season, the experts say, customers almost always get the pickup date they want, but that may not be possible this summer. The accelerated pace and workload during peak move season may require Saturday pack-outs and pickups.

Customers may also be asked to defer their pickup until a later date to make room for families that must leave earlier.



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