

## Moving Against the Moving Crooks

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Labor Day marks the end of the moving season, which began after Memorial Day. Unfortunately, not all of the estimated 40 million Americans who change residences during 2008 have had a smooth move. A few, in fact, have had their worldly possessions held hostage by what our industry calls “rogue operators” -- imposters who are often really criminals.

We know all-too-well these incidents have damaged our members’ reputation, because we’re the moving industry’s only national trade association, and we cringe each time we hear about one of these scam artists. This summer we had reporters and consumers contact us for help when self-styled “movers” didn’t live up to their promises, often made on a Web site that masked their phony operations. We heard about a trailer of household goods being held for ransom unless the customer paid an exorbitant delivery fee. Or a claim that the items suddenly weighed more than they did when loaded -- and would cost substantially more to deliver.

Yet thankfully, not only do these incidents not tell whole story - they’re actually a small fraction of it. The vast majority of Americans who use a moving company are quite satisfied with the professionals who are members of the American Moving & Storage Association (AMSA). In fact, 99.9% of all moving claims by customers are resolved without litigation or even arbitration.

One reason is that many moving companies have a long heritage of family ownership. They work hard to avoid tarnishing their good names - and many are equally proud of their community involvement as a local business.

To eliminate the bad apples, AMSA has spent the past year developing a new consumer protection and certification program called ProMover.<sup>SM</sup> This initiative will give consumers a way to separate reputable, professional movers from the con artists. It will be in place starting in January and is designed to counter scammers like never before.

Under our new requirements, standards for AMSA membership will include a review of any felony convictions of the company’s owners, officers or majority stockholders regarding matters over which the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), the Surface Transportation Board (STB) or any state consumer protection agency has jurisdiction; verification of company ownership with the appropriate state corporation commission; and a review of each applicant’s Web site for improper advertising. Each new applicant must also complete a signatory agreement attesting it will comply with federal regulations and uphold the AMSA Code of Ethics.

We’re also instituting an easily-recognizable ProMover<sup>SM</sup> logo that stands for a set of basic, honest business principles -- a distinctive, stylized “M” that at a glance will give customers the

confidence of knowing they and their cherished possessions aren't being taken for a ride. Starting in January, look for this "seal of approval" on a professional moving company's Web site, in advertising Yellow Page ads.

ProMover<sup>SM</sup> will be a guiding light for harried consumers. If they take advantage of it, we know next year's moving season will be even more satisfying for everyone, except the criminals.

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AMSA Web site: [www.promover.org](http://www.promover.org)