

## PCS SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR MOVES BETWEEN 2008 - 2010

Moving is part of the military lifestyle. Relocation programs and the moving process have changed since 2008 and we asked you to share your experience with this updated process. The National Military Family Association survey solicited information about Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves between 2008 through 2010. This survey asked families to:

- identify the relocation resources they used;
- tell whether they participated in a house hunting trip;
- explain about damage to household goods;
- describe the claims process; and
- identify the top three relocation challenges and more.

Read below for our highlights.

Our PCS survey was posted on our website [www.militaryfamily.org](http://www.militaryfamily.org) from September 7, 2010 – October 6, 2010. Out of the 834 participants, 95% completed the full survey.

41% of the survey respondents moved in 2010 with 67% of all respondents moving CONUS (Continental United States) to CONUS, followed by 18% with an OCONUS (Outside the Continental United States) to CONUS move, and 11% with a CONUS to OCONUS move.

### **Resources Used to Help with Move**

77% of respondents used the Internet as a resource to help plan their move and 1 out of 2 contacted the housing office at the gaining installation.

When it comes to a house-hunting trip, respondents are evenly divided with 1/3 making a trip to the new physical location and 1/3 not making a trip. Only 10% responded they would like to make the trip, but were not able to due to the service member's deployment, other military obligations, or other family commitments.

41% of respondents were able to move door-to-door and did not reside in temporary housing while 20% waited for a housing assignment on base and 20% sought temporary housing while looking for a place to live in the local community. Of those respondents who waited for housing, 1 out of 4 waited ten days or less in temporary housing.

### **Important Factors When Deciding Where to Live**

More than 63% of survey participants identified the following three items as the “most important” factors when deciding where to live:

- ability to cover most housing costs out of the service member’s Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH);
- education – quality schools and programs for children and/or adults; and
- safety and security of neighborhood.

1 out of 2 respondents selected access to medical facilities, community amenities, commute time to the installation, and type/size of housing as “important” factors. While 2 out of 3 participants selected availability of public transportation as “not important.”

### **Damage, Claims and Customer Satisfaction Survey**

While 70% of participants reported damage to their household goods in their most recent PCS, only 36% filed a claim. 17% thought the claims process was too complicated. Nearly 44% of respondents have completed or plan to complete their Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS), yet 1 out of 4 participants are not aware of the CSS. Survey respondents expressed concern with the claims filing process. A Marine Corps spouse said, “Why was there a change to filing online? The process is too intimidating though I am pressing on.” Another spouse shared a specific concern, “Under the old system we obtained estimates for repair of broken items. Under the current system the shipper sends out an estimator. In my personal experience, and in the experience of friends who have recently moved, the shipper furnished estimates were much lower than actual expense to repair broken and damaged items. You have to accept the offer within 30 days and many times you haven’t completed the repair prior to accepting the shipper’s offer. When I attempted to contact the person who did our estimate I was told he only does estimates, not repairs. He’s the only guy in town who thought the costs of those repairs should be as low as what he provided in his report.”

### **Top 3 Challenges**

- More than 50% of the respondents identified uncovered expenses related to the move as one of the top three moving challenges;
- 40% identified challenges with the Transportation Management Office (TMO), transportation provider, pick up or delivery of household goods, and/or storage of household goods; and
- 33% of the respondents selected a spouse’s loss of job as a top challenge.

Comments ranged from “best move we ever had” to “worst experience ever.” An Army spouse said, “This move was THE BEST in EVERY way! Honestly! The movers were superb, and we’ve moved often enough to know how to plan for it. I guess we’re getting good at it - but things always change and there are continuously surprises.”

During the summer of 2010 our Association received emails and phone calls from frustrated families who were making PCS moves. Due to changes in the transportation system, many families had challenges with timely and efficient pick-up and delivery of their household goods. When they ran into obstacles, they didn’t know where to go for help. An Air Force spouse shared the frustration expressed by many who moved in 2010, “TMO offices are overwhelmed,

unprofessional, [and] not informed on the constant changing of moving requirements. The rules always seem to change from year to year and location to location. Nothing stays constant in the information [or] best practices . . . And when you do have an issue the standard response is ‘Write it on the form.’” Of those who reported challenges many commented about difficulties with individuals handling Household Goods (HHG) and the lack of communication between the transportation provider and TMO. Challenges with movers cited by respondents included: poor packing, refusing to unpack goods, carelessness with possessions, and delays with arrival of household goods. A Marine Corps spouse moving OCONUS to CONUS stated, “In 23 years and 12 moves, these were the worst movers we have ever had!”

### **How does this survey compare to previous relocation surveys?**

The top priorities when looking for a new home remain unchanged. Ability to cover most costs within the service member’s BAH, safety and security of the neighborhood, and quality of educational programs received the highest percentage of “most important” rating in both 2005 and 2010. These three factors are top priorities when families look for a new home at their next duty station. Families expressed concerns about residing in temporary housing in both 2005 and 2010. About the same percentage of families reported damage to their household goods; however, more families filed a claim in 2010 than in 2005. Does full replacement value make it worth the families’ time to file a claim?

Families have access to more resources to help them plan ahead for their move, including Plan My Move, Military Installation, the Automated Housing Referral Network, Military OneSource, and more. Many families are using some or all of these resources to help them move across the globe.

Uncovered expenses related to the move, such as security deposits or pet deposits, continue to be a challenge for military families. Families cited loss of a spouse’s job, inability to sell their home, moving to a higher cost area, or shipping a second vehicle overseas as examples of uncovered moving-related expenses. Military families are encouraged to have a moving fund to help prepare them for uncovered expense, but perhaps future increases in moving allowances could help alleviate some of these financial burdens.

Military families are mobile and as relocation resources continue to evolve, families will need access to the latest information to help them plan for a successful next move.