

TxDMV ★ 4000 JACKSON AVENUE, AUSTIN, TEXAS 78731 | Media@TxDMV.gov | www.TxDMV.gov

FOR IMMEDATE RELEASE May 1, 2013 Media@TxDMV.gov (512) 465-1484

MAY IS NATIONAL MOVING MONTH

Texas cities rank in U.S. top 10 for moving scams, Secretary of Transportation urges consumer education

TxDMV takes on new role assisting with federal investigations

HOUSTON – The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) joined U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood along with state, industry and consumer advocate officials today to urge Texans to educate themselves before hiring a moving company. In addition to its consumer education efforts, the TxDMV also recently entered an agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to assist with federal household goods investigations.

USDOT, TxDMV, Better Business Bureau, Southwest Movers Association, and the American Moving & Storage Association kicked off National Moving Month by warning consumers not to fall prey to moving scams at a press conference at the TxDMV Regional Service Center. May begins the summer moving season when more people change residences than any other time of year.

"Moving is an exciting, but hectic time – the last thing a family should have to worry about is whether their personal belongings will arrive at their new home," LaHood said. "The Department of Transportation is partnering with states like Texas to crack down on bad movers, while educating consumers. Knowing the red flags to moving fraud will help consumers choose wisely when hiring a mover so they can protect their move – and their memories – from the start."

Houston receives the fourth-most interstate moving complaints of any U.S. city, with New York, Los Angeles and Chicago taking the top three spots. San Antonio also ranks in the top 10. FMCSA traditionally investigates interstate complaints while moves inside Texas fall under the TxDMV.

However, TxDMV staff is currently being trained by FMCSA to enforce the federal consumer protection regulations. Texas is only the third state to enter into a formal agreement with FMCSA to conduct investigations on interstate moving companies. The other two states are Louisiana and Ohio.

The TxDMV reports complaints against illegal movers in Texas are up six percent in the past seven months and the Better Business Bureau of Houston and South Texas is seeing a 20 percent increase this year.

"Illegal operators posing as moving companies take a financial and emotional toll on consumers," said TxDMV Board Member Johnny Walker. "They can drive off with everything you own or hold your household goods hostage, refusing to unload your items until you pay them more money."

TxDMV Executive Director Whitney Brewster thanked the moving industry associations for their consumer and moving company educational programs. "It takes all of us to make a difference," she said.



"These actors, operating illegally, hurt the reputation of the hundreds of law-abiding, licensed movers in Texas," said John D. Esparza, executive director of Southwest Movers Association, the state moving association representing Texas mover members. "The moving industry is committed to working with the TxDMV and the Better Business Bureau to ensure consumers are not taken advantage of by rogue operators."

Southwest Movers Association and the American Moving & Storage Association offer certification programs called Pinnacle and ProMover that identify moving companies that adhere to the highest ethical and legal standards.

"If an offer seems too good to be true it probably is; that is an immediate warning sign you may not be working with a licensed mover," said Linda Bauer Darr, president and chief executive officer of the American Moving & Storage Association in Alexandria, Va., the industry's national trade group.

The U.S. Congress and Texas Legislature have increased fines and jail time for illegal operators.

"Laws and investigations help consumers after they have a problem, but the only one who can make sure rogue operators don't have any business is you," Brewster said.

Dan Parsons, president of the Better Business Bureau of Greater Houston and South Texas, said consumers need to stay away from free internet advertising sites. "Websites offering free classified ads are fertile ground for illegal moving operations," he said. "Before you hire any moving company in Texas go to the TxDMV website where you can check whether a moving company is licensed in the state, and whatever you do, don't hire one that isn't licensed."

To learn how to protect yourself when hiring a Texas moving company, go to:

Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, www.TxDMV.gov

Southwest Movers Association, www.mytexasmover.com

Better Business Bureau of Greater Houston & South Texas, www.BBBHouston.org; www.BBBSouthTexas.org

For out of state moves, more information is available from:

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, www.protectyourmove.gov

American Moving & Storage Association, www.moving.org

###