

Tips for making moving easier

By Erin K. Witt

Central Indiana is not only in the midst of summer, but also peak relocation season. Many families take advantage of children being out of school and the temperate weather and plan moves for June, July, and August.

Unfortunately, moving can be a stressful time in the best of circumstances. Along with the sentimental hardships of leaving familiar surroundings, family, and friends, moving can be a logistical nightmare.

Luckily, with a little proactive planning—and the following helpful hints—moving can be less of a headache and more of an adventure.

The most important piece of advice is to start early. The National Moving Network recommends a six-week timeline to ensure a smooth move.

Six weeks before the move:

- Take an objective look at what you own, and decide what must go and what can be left behind. Extra weight costs more money if you are using a moving company, and is simply added hassle if you are moving yourself.
- Organize a garage sale to decrease clutter.
- Start a central file for all of the details on your move, and collect receipts for moving-related expenses. Depending on your reason for moving, you may be entitled to a tax deduction.

Four weeks before the move:

- Notify the post office, magazines, credit card companies and friends and family of your change of address. The U. S. Postal Service offers a kit to make this process easier, available at www.usps.com.
- Contact utilities to schedule disconnection of services on the day following your move—you'll need them on while you're still in the house. Arrange for service to start the day before you move into your new home, so you have service when you arrive.
- If packing yourself, start packing seldom-used articles like fancy dishes and glasses, non-essential clothing, art, and decorative items.

Three weeks before the move:

- Start packing. Label the contents of all boxes, and pack carefully. Box essential items together, and write "Open First/Load Last" on these boxes. When you move into your new home, you'll be able to easily identify these boxes and get to

important items like pots, dishes, silverware, alarm clocks, bedding, pillows, towels, and essential items for babies or children.

- Contact your doctors, dentist, and veterinarian to receive copies of medical records. Contact your children's schools, and arrange for records to be forwarded to your new school district.
- Plan your food purchases to have as little as possible in the freezer or refrigerator by the time you move. Use up all frozen items, and buy only what you'll eat in the next three weeks, because you can't ship these items.

Two weeks before the move:

- Check with your insurance company to cancel current coverage or transfer coverage to your new home.
- Make arrangements for transporting your pets and any houseplants—movers can't take them in the van.

One week before the move:

- Dispose of toxic or flammable items that can't be moved. Drain the gas and oil from gas-powered tools such as lawn mowers and snow blowers.
- Pack your "trip kit" of necessary items that should go in your car and not the moving van: your checkbook, cash or traveler's checks, medications, essential toiletries, light bulbs, flashlight, toilet paper, pet food, glasses or contact lenses, baby or child care items, and your notebook of moving information.
- If you have young children, arrange for a baby-sitter to watch them on moving day. Also arrange for a baby-sitter to be available when you arrive at your new home with young children.

One day before the move:

- Empty and defrost your refrigerator and freezer, clean both with a disinfectant and let them air out. Put baking soda or charcoal inside to keep them fresh.
- Arrange for payment to the moving company. Payment must be made when your belongings arrive at your new home, and before your belongings are unloaded. Find out your moving company's accepted methods of payment, terms, and its policy for inspecting your belongings when they arrive to determine if any breakage has occurred.

Moving day

- Remove linens from the beds and pack in an “open first” box.
- If there is time, give the home a final cleaning, or arrange in advance for someone to perform this service the day after moving out.
- Leave your forwarding address and phone number for your home’s new occupants.

Move-in day

- If you arrive before the movers, tidy up your home so the movers can unpack items directly onto clean shelves. If you plan to line cupboards with shelving paper, this is a good time to do it.
- Check to make sure the utilities have been connected, and follow up on any delays.
- Confine your pets to an out-of-the-way room to help keep them from running away or getting unduly agitated by all the activity. You might even consider boarding them overnight at a local kennel until you’re settled.

One person should check the moving inventory as items are unloaded. A second person should direct the movers on where to place items. Once all items are unloaded, unpack only what you need for the first day or two. Give yourself at least two weeks to unpack and organize your belongings.