

Home electronics: Ten steps to a safe move

By Erin K. Witt

Moving is one of life's most stressful experiences. Besides making arrangements for relocation, moving also requires packing all your belongings. Ensuring that Aunt Peg's antique depression glass collection, your wedding photos, and your new home PC all arrive to your destination safely can take a great deal of planning and skilled packing.

Expensive electronics purchases like DVD players, home theatre systems, and computers all must be moved with special care. Packing is not the time to take short cuts. To protect your investment, Storage USA suggests the following tips to pack and move electronics safely.

Tip #1: Always follow the manufacturers' advice for packing and storing electronic equipment. They know the most about what it takes to protect the product. Consult the product homeowner's manual or manufacturer's Web site for details about your specific item make and model.

Tip #2: If possible, save original boxes and packing materials for re-packing. You won't find packing materials that fit as well as those custom-made for the item. However, if you are like the 99 percent of consumers that didn't bother to keep these cumbersome boxes, don't worry. If the original packing is not available, start with these essentials: sturdy cartons, newsprint or bubble wrap, tape, scissors, and felt tip markers to number and label each box. It is important to place insulation material on all sides (bottom, left side, right side, top) of your electronics devices. Make sure that there are no empty spaces inside the box, to avoid jarring of your electronic devices during transport. And since electronics and small appliances can be heavy, be sure to tape the bottom of each box securely.

Tip #3: When disassembling electronics, such as computers, stereos and other devices that have numerous cords, place small colored stickers on each cord and the same color sticker where the cord connects to the device. This will save you the hassle of trying to figure out what goes where when reassembling your electronics.

Tip #4: Sensitive electronics such as computers and TVs may need to be stored in climate-controlled units. Seek advice from the manufacturer or your storage facility—sometimes, temperature controlled moving vans are even available.

Tip #5: To reduce the chance of attracting unwanted attention from potential thieves, place small, expensive items such as stereo equipment, DVD players, and camcorders in unmarked boxes. Number the boxes and keep a corresponding master list of the numbers so that only you know what the contents are. At your storage facility, place these items out of view towards the back of the storage unit.

Tip #6: Dust damage can be as hazardous to electronics as a dropped box. To minimize damage caused by dust inside electronic devices, wrap them in linens or clean paper. Seal boxes completely with packing tape to keep out the dust. For further protection, cover electronics with moving pads, sheets or light blankets.

Tip #7: Before moving a home computer, save important files, cautions the Movers Index. While this tip seems obvious, many people forget to do this in the whirlwind of moving activity. A useful way to locate your most important files is to keep them with your program disks (operating system software, business software, and games). Keep these disks in a secure box.

Tip #8: The computer tower is the life-blood of your PC. Your computer tower contains several computer cards that are inserted into its motherboard. But with proper packing, you can ensure a safe delivery to your new home. All computers first must have the power turned off. Remove any computer disks or CDs from the machine and place in their covers. If necessary, place a cardboard disk designed for moving in the floppy or CD drive of the computer. Now the unit can be safely unplugged and packed. The tower should be packed upright. After purchasing a proper size box and insulation material, make sure that your tower is completely surrounded (bottom, left side, right side, top) with insulation to keep the tower safe and sound for the duration of the move. Support hardware like the monitor and printer should also be package in this way. Joysticks, mouses, keyboards, etc. and other computer gadgets and accessories should be placed in one box so they are not lost. All boxes should be labeled with a permanent marker.

Tip #9: Make a list of the components in each box. With luck, you'll be putting all this back together when you reach your destination—make sure all the parts are present and accounted for before you start assembling.

Tip #10: After delivery, always allow electronics plenty of time to acclimate to the temperature of your new home before reconnecting and using them, particularly if your van has been traveling in cold weather conditions. Six to eight hours should be sufficient time.