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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Millions Recovered for Consumers Duped by Malicious Movers



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—This National Consumer Protection Week, Attorney General Ashley Moody is announcing court action taken to stop malicious moving companies preying on Floridians. In the past year, Attorney General Moody and her Consumer Protection Division secured four judgments against companies that used deceptive advertising or other deceptive tactics to rip off customers. The judgments resulted in more than $2.7 million in recoveries.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “Malicious movers beware, if you plan to take advantage of consumers simply trying to relocate, my Consumer Protection Division will find out and your fraudulent trek will be stopped in its tracks. With spring right around the corner, many people will be boxing up their belongings and moving to a new home. Moving can be an arduous project and could turn disastrous if bad actors, posing as legitimate movers or brokers, try to take advantage by inflating prices, holding goods hostage or using other deceitful tactics.”

Attorney General Moody’s Consumer Protection Division recently obtained judgments in four lawsuits filed in federal court, each alleging that the individual companies engaged in deceptive advertising of moving services, failed to provide proper estimates, failed to relinquish household goods and failed to provide timely pick-up or delivery of goods in accordance with service contracts.

As of January, all four cases have been successfully litigated, including:

Finest Movers, Inc.: The Attorney General's Office obtained a consent final judgment against Finest Movers in January requiring the company to pay $80,000 in restitution to consumers and barring the defendant from providing artificially low quotes. Finest Movers allegedly misrepresented the price or nature of moving services offered and the experience or training level of employees or moving agents.

Ocean Moving & Storage Corp.: Last September, a consent final judgment was obtained against Ocean Moving & Storage requiring the company to pay $50,000 in restitution to consumers, $10,000 in civil penalties and barring it from providing artificially low quotes. Ocean Moving & Storage allegedly misrepresented the price or nature of moving services offered and held consumer household goods hostage or otherwise refused to return customer's property.

Moving and Storage Accounting, Inc.: Attorney General Moody's Office litigated two separate judgments in this case in April and May of 2020. In the first, a consent final judgment against Grace Metzger, Moving and Storage Accounting Inc. and Moving and Storage Accounting Services ordered the corporate defendants to pay $300,000 in consumer restitution and $700,000 in penalties, including $120,000 in enhanced senior penalties, and approximately $274,000 in fees/costs. In the second, a default final judgment ordered the defendants Maxx Socher, Moving Service Accounting and Storage, Inc. and Dr. Schlepper Inc. to pay $300,000 in consumer restitution and $700,000 in penalties, including $120,000 in enhanced senior penalties. Both judgments also barred the defendants from owning, operating or participating in moving services.

US Moving Services, Inc.: Finally, an obtained consent final judgment against US Moving Services in April 2020 required the company to pay $78,000 in restitution to consumers and barred it from providing artificially low quotes. Similar to Finest Movers, US Moving Services allegedly misrepresented the price or nature of moving services offered and the experience or training level of employees or moving agents.

To guard against moving scams consumers should:

- Read all documents thoroughly to understand what is being agreed to prior to signing;
- If booking a move through a broker, ask for a list of motor carriers previously used and research both the carriers and the broker;
- Seek multiple itemized, written estimates for the move and check whether the estimate accounts for particular moving services;
- Ask the mover for proof of liability and worker's compensation coverage, and call the insurer to confirm that the policy is active; and
- Research companies. Ask for recommendations and check with the Better Business Bureau at BBB.org for complaints.

More helpful tips and red flags regarding moving scams can be found in the new *Scams at a Glance: On the Move* brochure.

To view *Scams at a Glance: On the Move* in English, click here.

To view *Scams at a Glance: On the Move* in Spanish, click here.

Scams at a Glance is Attorney General Moody's consumer outreach program, complete with a webpage on the Florida Attorney General's website with information about common and emerging scams. The webpage also provides downloadable brochures designed to teach consumers how to avoid falling victim to fraud and scams.

To access the Scams at a Glance webpage for more content related to common scams, click here.

Attorney General Moody is working hard to educate Floridians about new and upcoming scams, not only through the Scams at a Glance program, but also through the Consumer Alert program. Scams at a Glance is another fraud prevention tool to help support Consumer Alerts and bolster consumer knowledge about common scam tactics.

To view recent Consumer Alerts, visit MyFloridaLegal.com/ConsumerAlert.

Anyone who experiences a moving scam should contact the Attorney General's Office by visiting MyFloridaLegal.com or calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM.