



*July 1, 2019*

U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
West Building, Ground Floor  
Washington, DC 20590

**Re: Comments on Docket Number FMCSA-2018-0356 - Extension of a  
Currently-Approved Information Collection Request: Transportation of Household  
Goods; Consumer Protection)**

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### **Background:**

The International Association of Movers (IAM) is the household goods moving and forwarding industry's largest global trade association. With more than 2,000 members, its companies provide moving, forwarding, shipping, logistics, and related services in more than 170 countries for household goods (HHGs) shipments. Many of our member's household goods moves are for military service members as well as other U.S. government and agency relocations.

IAM is pleased to provide the following comments on **FMCSA Docket #2018-0356**, which reviews industry requirements for consumer protection regarding the transportation of HHGs. IAM and its members support providing transparent, clear and effective information to consumers at all phases of the HHG moving process.

Beginning in 2016, IAM joined with other industry and agency stakeholders, as part of the Congressionally-mandated Household Goods Consumer Protection Working Group. The FMCSA-convened Working Group made specific recommendations to improve Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 375, the same section being reviewed by this ICR.

IAM highlights the following areas and recommendations made by the Working Group, for the FMCSA to consider moving forward on:

### **Rogue Operators:**

While the Internet and connected electronic communications have made many elements of the moving process easier for the consumer, it has also continued to provide opportunities for rogue operators to infiltrate and deceive the public during the moving process. IAM makes clear that the Association supports efforts to eliminate these online-only rogue operators, and supports FMCSA's efforts to remove them from the HHGs



moving landscape. IAM by-laws and membership requirements ensure that rogue operators are not eligible for membership in the Association.

While the ICR and purview of the Working Group has limited jurisdiction over rogue operators, recommendations to improve transparency and protections for consumers can reduce the negative impact on the moving process.

### **“Your Rights and Responsibilities When You Move” Consumer Pamphlet:**

IAM supports the recommendation that the FMCSA permit the pamphlet and associated information to be communicated to consumers in an electronic fashion, in recognition of the changing nature of communications. FMCSA should work to develop a framework to ensure such electronic communications are both printable and easy to read.

IAM also agrees that the pamphlet should be able to adapt to future recommendations. IAM believes this critical information be considered a “living document”, able to incorporate evolving technology platforms that consumers are utilizing in greater measures.

### **Amending a Moving Estimate:**

The Working Group reviewed the possibility of eliminating loopholes that can be exploited by rogue operators. One such loophole pertains to the practice of amending an estimate.

From the Working Group Report and Recommendations:

“One way that rogue operators currently document changes to estimates is through a form purporting to amend the estimate and which includes a checkbox that indicates whether or not the estimate was amended prior to commencement of loading. Rogue operators will take advantage of this type of form by checking the box *after* the individual shipper has signed the document and nearly always after loading has commenced. Investigators have no way of knowing whether or not the box was checked at the time the shipper signed the estimate or prior to loading.

IAM supports the Working Group recommendation that FMCSA add language to existing regulations to clarify that issuing a completely new estimate is the only option for the mover if the conditions of the estimate must change prior to load, and that amendments to original estimates are *not* permitted. This new estimate must also be signed by the individual shipper and a record of the date, time, and manner that the new estimate was accepted must be provided.



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While this may provide an additional, limited burden to industry, the benefits of price clarity, reducing potential HHG “hostage loads” and discouraging rogue operators makes this change worthwhile.

### **Moving Surveys:**

IAM also agrees with the Working Group’s recommendation that virtual surveys are a realistic and viable option. If a consumer’s goods are located more than 50 miles from the mover’s agent that is providing the estimate, they should be given the option of a visual survey. Consumers should continue to have the option to waive the visual survey if they choose, but movers must offer them the option of a visual survey regardless of distance.

Further, IAM agrees with the Working Group recommendation that forms filled out online by consumers should not be acceptable. This will deter rogue operators that utilize phone surveys, questionnaires and online forms, in lieu of legitimate visual surveys. As noted in the Working Group Report, these questionnaires and phone surveys can also be intentionally misleading.

IAM looks forward to continuing collaboration with the FMCSA to inform and protect our consumers throughout the HHG moving process.

Sincerely,

Chuck

Charles White  
President