

Three ways to take the financial pain out of your next military move

If you're like the 700,000 military service members who are re-assigned to new locations each year, you shell out an average of \$1,725 for non-reimbursable expenses.

When you combine moving costs with the difficulty of uprooting your life every few years, relocations can take a big toll. While some moving hassles are unavoidable, you can ease the financial pain of PCSing with a little advance planning. Consider following this timeline for your next move:

What to do now:

Avoid budget blues

Whether your move is days or weeks away, develop a moving budget in advance to keep your finances on track and avoid last-minute costs.

- Find out exactly what the military will cover, and what costs fall on you. You can visit your family center or finance office for more information.
- Budget for shipping charges, temporary housing expenses, and start-up fees for utilities.
- Make a list of things you'll have to buy when you move in and estimate those costs.
- Use this budget to determine how much you should save for your next move.

What to do before you leave:

Prevent moving mishaps

Some moving horror stories result from damaged or lost property. So it's critical to have the right levels of insurance before you PCS. In the case of a moving mishap, insurance can mean the difference between disappointment and financial disaster.

- Find out how much of your personal property the government movers will insure. If it's not

enough to provide full protection, a temporary renters insurance policy could be an affordable way to cover the difference.

- If you're shipping a vehicle, review your auto insurance policy to find out if moving-related damages are covered. If they're not, ask your insurer about purchasing shipment coverage.

What to do after you arrive:

Fine-tune your finances

Once you settle into your new place, consider fine-tuning your finances to make your next move

easier. The stop-and-go that comes with a PCS – stopping everything and starting over again in a new area – can be a shocker to your finances. Military members can find some relief by working with companies that “move with you” and serve your needs wherever you go.

- Consider using online banking so you don't have to worry if there's a branch bank near your new home. You can also set up automatic bill payments to make your life easier during future transitions.
- Choose an insurance company that offers coverage in all 50 states and abroad, so you don't have to change providers with every move.
- Open a separate savings account and contribute enough each month to ease the cash crunch before your next move.
- Set up automatic transfers for investment accounts to ensure your savings habits won't slip.

If you do get into financial trouble, do not forget that all Services have an emergency relief fund, which can be accessed on any military installation through the Family Center's Financial Assistance manager.

With the right preparations, your next PCS could be financially painless – leaving a surplus in your cash supply instead of draining it. ●

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Managing Your Move Online

- Visit www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil for moving-related information.
- Visit www.dfas.mil for complete information on pay and travel benefits.
- Visit www.usaa.com to order a free PCS guide.
- The United States Postal Service offers a change of address and a moving guide at www.usps.com.

Money Savers: Your Benefits

The most up-to-date information on allowances and entitlements is on the Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee website at www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem Some basic PCS benefits you may qualify for include:

- Advance Basic Pay
- Advance Basic Allowance, Housing (BAH)
- Dislocation Allowance (DLA)
- Monetary Allowance in Lieu of Transportation (MALT)
- Per Diem Allowance
- Temporary Lodging Expense (TLE)

Visit the relocation manager in your family center for more information on your benefits.