

Pam Bondi
Attorney General

News Release

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Attorney General Bondi Takes Action Against 14 Moving Companies for Holding Furniture Hostage



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Pam Bondi today announced court actions against 14 moving companies, along with several affiliated entities and individuals. Allegations against the companies include deceptive marketing and sales of household moving services, while holding consumers' goods hostage for ransom in Florida and other states. Many of the victims are senior citizens.

“Our complaints allege these moving companies deliberately loaded people’s belongings onto a truck, hiked up prices and then forced customers to pay before releasing the items,” said Attorney General Bondi. “We are working closely with the U.S. Department of Transportation to stop these scams and hold the companies responsible for using these deceptive tactics.”

“This civil action highlights our persistent efforts to combat deceptive household goods movers who take advantage of customers by holding their personal belongings hostage for ransom, demanding the owners pay unanticipated, exorbitant fees,” said Todd Damiani, Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General Regional Special Agent-in-Charge. “We appreciate the extraordinary efforts of the Florida Attorney General’s Office and valuable assistance from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. The OIG is committed to continuing to work with local, state and federal

prosecutorial partners across the country to ensure that household goods movers adhere to federal laws and regulations designed to protect the public.”

The moving companies, located in Broward and Dade counties, allegedly used false or deceptive advertising to induce consumers to purchase moving services. The companies proclaimed that the services were to be performed by highly trained, professional or expert movers. However, untrained laborers regularly performed the moves, often causing damage to, destroying or stealing the consumers’ property.

Many consumers allegedly received low-price, purportedly binding estimates from the companies. In numerous instances, once the moving services began and the household goods were at least partially loaded onto moving trucks, the defendants substantially increased the prices. If consumers refused to pay the new higher amount, the complaints allege that the defendants threatened to hold the consumers’ goods hostage for ransom and add fees to the demanded amount until the consumers paid the higher fee.

The Attorney General’s Office filed four separate complaints in federal court alleging violations of the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act, as well as both federal and state moving statutes, against the following businesses and individuals:

- **Finest Movers, Inc. d/b/a East Coast Moving & Storage, located in Hallandale Beach, and principal Charles Ohana;**
- **Moving and Storage Accounting Inc., Moving and Storage Accounting Services Inc., Moving Services Accounting and Storage Inc., and Dr. Schlepper Inc., d/b/a Full Service Van Lines, located in Pompano Beach, and principals Maxx J. Socher and Grace Metzger;**
- **Ocean Moving & Storage Corp., located in Pembroke Pines, and principal Itai Carmel; and**
- **U.S. Moving Services Inc., Moving & Storage SF Inc., formerly known as Safeway Moving & Storage Inc., and Moving Systems Inc., formerly known as Spartan Van Lines, located in North Miami, and principal Yehoshua Vaknin.**

The Attorney General’s Office filed two additional complaints in state court against the following companies and the principals for allegedly engaging in similar ransom moving schemes:

- **All USA Van Lines Inc, Moving Group Inc, Top Movers Inc., Guzi’s Investments, LLC, Cross Country Movers LLC, 24/7 Moving Services Inc., Transworld Movers Inc., and Emoving Company, located in Hollywood, Florida, and principal Ohad E. Guzi a/k/a Chad Cuzi; and**
- **Upline Moving & Storage Inc., formerly known as #1 Van Lines Inc., located in Hollywood, Florida, and its principal, Daneshia L. Augustin.**

These complaints are part of an ongoing Florida Attorney General’s Office initiative with the U.S. Department of Transportation called Operation Moving Target. The complaints seek a permanent injunction, consumer restitution and civil penalties from each of the 14 moving companies and principals.

The Broward County Sherriff’s Office, the City of Delray Beach Police Department, the City of Miramar Police Department, the Delray Beach Office of Seniors vs. Crime, Inc., the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement,

and the U.S. DOT Office of the Inspector General, are providing valuable assistance with the initiative.

Anyone suspecting deceptive or unfair business practices can file a complaint with the Attorney General's Office online at MyFloridaLegal.com or via phone at 1(866) 9NO-SCAM.

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