What is a PCS, and how to plan the move

A planning checklist for Permanent Change of Station. Print it, work through it when orders drop, and keep it with your paperwork.

TWO MOVE PATHS

A government-arranged household goods shipment through DPS, and a Personally Procured Move (PPM, formerly DITY), are not the same job. One is booked for you. The other you arrange, with possible reimbursement based on the government constructed cost.

WHAT THAT MEANS FOR YOU

Confirm the order type before you pack out. A PCS changes duty stations. A PCA usually does not. A deployment is temporary and is not a household move. Your transportation office and finance office set the rules, not a moving company sales script.

01 CONFIRM THE ORDERS

Read the packet before you give notice on a lease or put a deposit on a truck. The report-no-later-than date is the clock everything else runs backward from.

What the orders decide

Destination, travel window, dependent travel, and which allowances apply. Command confirms whether this is a PCS, a PCA, or something else.

CONUS vs OCONUS

The 48 contiguous states are CONUS. Alaska, Hawaii, territories, and overseas are OCONUS, with passports, customs, and longer transit.

- [ ] Orders reviewed front to back
- [ ] Report-no-later-than date on the calendar
- [ ] Dependents authorized to travel
- [ ] CONUS or OCONUS destination confirmed
- [ ] PCS vs PCA vs deployment confirmed with command
- [ ] Weight allowance noted from counseling / JTR
- [ ] Folder started for orders, IDs, and finance records

Start here, not the week you want to leave. Housing, schools, and trucks all run backward from the report date. A PCA that does not change stations should not trigger a household pack-out.

Five questions worth asking before you book anything

1. Have I completed DPS counseling, or PPM counseling, with my transportation office?
2. Is this a full PPM, a partial PPM, or a government-arranged HHG shipment?
3. What weight tickets and receipts does finance need if I hire my own movers?
4. What is the current TLE or TLA window on my orders, and which receipts count?
5. When should housing and school timelines start relative to the report date?

02 CHOOSE HHG OR PPM

Not automatically one or the other. A Personally Procured Move lets you hire licensed movers. A government HHG shipment is booked through DPS. Confirm the path with your transportation office first.

Government HHG

The military books a contracted mover. Capacity in PCS season can limit dates. Claims run through the military system.

PPM / DITY

You arrange transportation. If goods cross state lines, the carrier (or broker plus assigned carrier) needs FMCSA authority. Keep certified weight tickets.

- [ ] Counseling scheduled with the transportation office
- [ ] HHG, full PPM, or partial PPM chosen in writing
- [ ] Written estimates from licensed interstate movers or a licensed broker
- [ ] USDOT / MC numbers written down
- [ ] Empty and loaded weight tickets planned (PPM)
- [ ] High-value items photographed
- [ ] Orders, meds, and jewelry stay with you, not on the truck
- [ ] Peak-season dates flagged (late spring through summer)

03 PAPERWORK, LODGING, AND THE GAINING STATION

Allowances change. Do not budget off a blog dollar figure. Confirm current TLE, TLA, dislocation allowance, and per diem with finance.

Keep with you

Not prohibited. Simply too important to hand to a crew.

- [ ] Passports, visas, and vaccinations (OCONUS)
- [ ] Pet import rules checked
- [ ] Sponsor contact at the gaining station
- [ ] Temporary lodging receipts folder
- [ ] Dislocation allowance / per diem discussed with finance
- [ ] School and medical records packet
- [ ] Lease or housing notice timed to the report date
- [ ] PPM quotes saved for the reimbursement packet

ITEM	WHAT TO DO
Orders	Read entitlements and dependent travel before giving notice on a lease.
HHG vs PPM	Counsel with your transportation office. Do not mix the two without a partial-PPM plan.
Weight	Stay inside authorized weight. Extra pounds can be yours to pay.
Lodging	TLE (CONUS) or TLA (OCONUS). Keep receipts. Confirm current caps with finance.
PPM paperwork	Certified scale tickets, receipts, estimate, and bill of lading.
Peak season	Book carriers early if you report May through August.

Planning a PPM?

Safe Ship Moving Services is a licensed moving broker. We match you with a vetted licensed and insured motor carrier and stay on your side of it. We do not replace DPS counseling or promise a reimbursement amount. Visit safeshipmoving.com to get started with a moving estimate.

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