

## DOD increases money for do-it-yourself moves

By Joseph Lacdan, Army News Service 04 June 2020



*The Department of Defense has increased the monetary sum Soldiers will receive if they choose the personally-procured move option during PCS moves. (Photo Credit: Lisa Bishop)*

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WASHINGTON -- Soldiers now have an added incentive to choose the personally-procured move, or PPM option, when moving to their next duty stations this summer.

Aside from limiting exposure to COVID-19, a revision to the Defense Department's Joint Travel Regulations has increased the monetary payment to Soldiers who choose to move their household goods.

From May 26 through Dec. 31, Soldiers using the PPM program can receive a payment equal to 100 percent of the estimated cost the government would pay to move their items. When Soldiers choose the option, they shoulder the cost and responsibility of packing and moving their belongings themselves and the payment compensates them for those expenses.

The PPM program gives Soldiers an alternative to a traditional

permanent-change-of-station move, where a government-contracted moving company ships their household goods to their new duty station.

With more Soldiers expected to make PCS moves during the latter part of the peak moving season, an updated policy couldn't have come at a more opportune time, said Larry Lock, Army compensation and entitlements chief G-1.

While much of the country remains under COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, making a PPM might be the more practical option for some Soldiers and their families, he said. Safety restrictions vary by state and commercial movers will be heavily tasked, he added.

The change could help increase the number of PCS moves in what the Army's G-4 predicts will be a busier moving season. Moving more Soldiers to their new duty stations helps the Army maintain readiness and meet its global force requirements, said Derrick Candler, chief of Transportation Policy Division, G-4.

"Industry may face challenges to support this huge increase during the summer season," Candler said. "This initiative can help increase the number of moves to ensure our people can get to their next duty station as quickly as possible. This will have positive effects on the entire Army and DOD. The PPM also reduces the strain on families and moving companies."

As part of the continued efforts to improve quality of life for its military families, the Defense Travel Management Office had pursued the change to ease the burden of families who prefer the PPM over a traditional move, Lock said. He added that PPM moves typically result in a cost savings for the government and the policy update will pass those savings onto the families.

In April, the DOD signed a \$7.2 billion contract with a single company, New Jersey-based American Roll-On Roll-Off Carrier Group, to move household goods for the military.

After Dec. 31, Candler said the policy will be re-evaluated in conjunction with each military branch on whether the reimbursable costs will remain at 100 percent or return to 95 percent.

The DOD has made monetary allowance payments of 95 percent for PPMs since 1998 when it bumped the sum up from 80 percent. Candler said that each service must collectively agree to make the change permanent.

"Now, we're hoping based on this change and the moves that take place

during the summer, that we can justify continuing this,” he said. “All the services benefit from this increase.”

Lock said typically younger, single Soldiers, or young couples with no children choose the PPM option. Soldiers with more time in service and those with larger families often choose to have their household items shipped by a government contractor.

Also possibly boosting the number of moves this summer is a change to granting exceptions to policy for the COVID-19 stop-move order. Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy delegated approval authority for PCS moves, temporary-duty assignments, and military leave to the first brigadier general or Senior Executive Service officer in a Soldier’s chain of command.

Approval authorities may grant exceptions for Soldiers determined to be mission essential, for changes necessary for humanitarian purposes, and for extreme hardship.

Soldiers who fall under an exception must travel with printed copies of the approved exception to policy. Soldiers exempt from travel restrictions will be required to carry a memorandum signed by their supervisor that states the reason for exemption.

Soldiers and civilians enrolled in military education programs qualify as exempt from travel restrictions and do not require an exception to policy. These programs include officer training and education programs, non-commissioned officer professional development and specialty training programs and civilian training, education and development programs.