

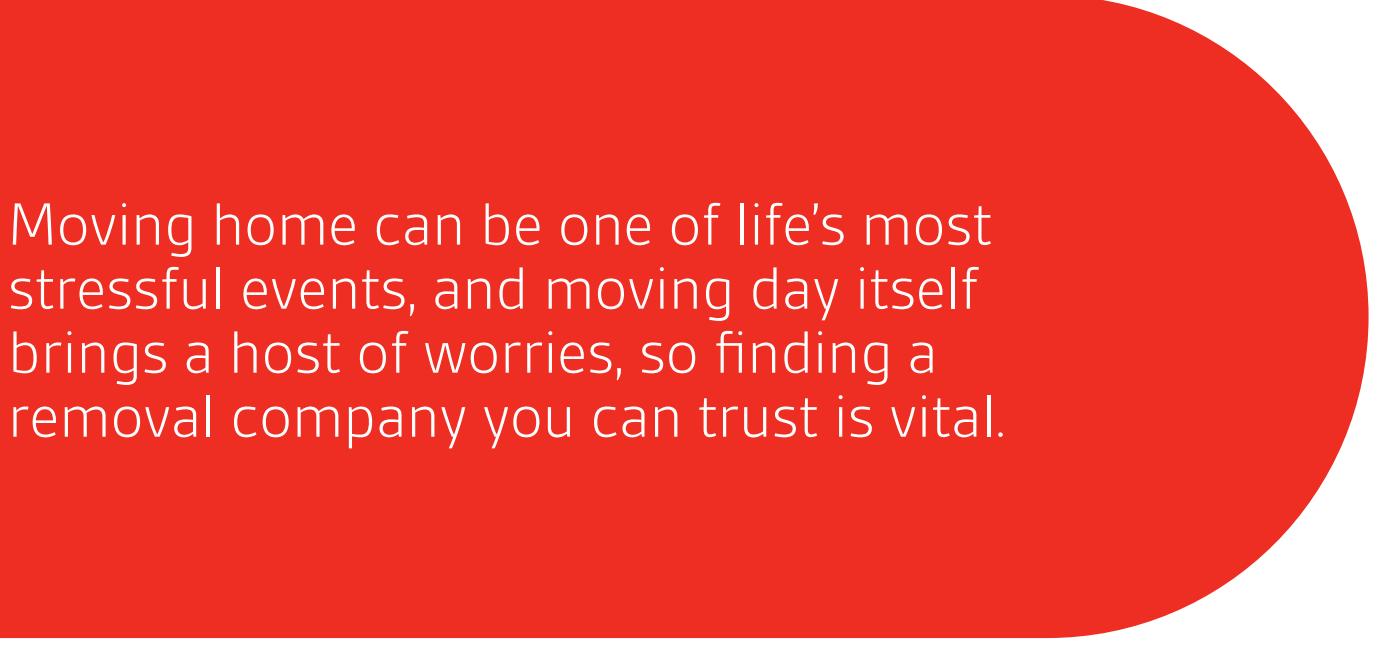


Smooth moves

A consumer's guide to the British Standards
for furniture removal

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Moving home can be one of life's most stressful events, and moving day itself brings a host of worries, so finding a removal company you can trust is vital.

A series of standards from BSI, now widely adopted in the UK, can help provide the assurance you need.

BS EN 12522 – the basics

The standards, 'Furniture removal activities – Furniture removal for private individuals' (BS EN 12522-1 and BS EN 12522- 2), are designed to protect consumers at every stage of the move, from packing and transport to dealing with disputes.

Companies that sign up must meet certain minimum requirements. For example they must provide:

- Qualified staff, who are punctual, courteous and honest
- Detailed written quotations that specify the service to be provided
- Suitable packaging materials, equipment and vehicles
- The opportunity to check your furniture and effects before and after the move
- Assistance with compensation procedures in the event of claims for loss or damage

BS EN 12522 – the details

Feedback from customers shows that use of the standards has led to higher levels of customer satisfaction. Some of the benefits for consumers include improved communication, better staff training and clearer procedures.

The standards are voluntary but companies that choose to adopt them must meet the following requirements.

Professional staff

- Staff should be punctual, polite, honest and suitably qualified or experienced. Staff responsible for handling your furniture should undertake annual training to upgrade their skills
- There should be a trained team foreman who supervises the packing, collection and delivery staff, and is responsible for ensuring the move is carried out safely



Before the move

Removers should:

- Provide you with clear information about their services. A pre-move survey is recommended so that they can accurately assess the value and the volume of your possessions
- Provide a written quotation, which details the service, the cost, the value of your possessions, the company's liability for loss and damage, and the procedures for dealing with complaints. When you accept this quotation in writing, it becomes your contract
- Draw up a waybill – a document that details how the company will carry out the move. You will be given a copy to sign and the removal staff will have copies to refer to during the move

The standards also recommend that companies:

- Offer a special packing service for high-value objects
- Offer optional services such as disconnecting and reconnecting electrical appliances, or dismantling and installing fitted kitchens. Ensure any additional services are in your written contract

During the move

The removal team should:

- Provide enough packaging materials and protective wrapping to keep your possessions safe. For example, each vehicle should carry a toolbox, tape, bubble wrap, clean white paper, and a

selection of cartons to protect items such as linen, lampshades, pictures and mirrors

- Make sure boxes and cartons are the right shape, size and strength to protect their contents
- Pack bedding, clothing, and kitchen utensils under hygienic conditions
- Use a vehicle that is waterproof, safe and secure
- Refer to the waybill at each stage of the move, and ask you to sign it to confirm packing, loading and delivery

After the move

Removers should:

- Ask you to sign a completion declaration and fill in a customer satisfaction questionnaire
- Aim to settle any problems amicably without the need for legal proceedings, referring disputes to their professional organization where appropriate
- Inform you of the procedure to follow if you want to make a compensation claim

Quality management

Removers should have a quality manual, which details how the company carries out various activities including:

- Recruitment, training and health and safety
- Managing incidents and accidents
- Handling customer enquiries

Frequently asked questions

Q. What is BSI?

A. BSI is the UK National Standards Body, which has been developing standards for more than 100 years to make products and services safer for consumers. Standards set out good practice and guidelines for organizations to follow.

Q. Do all removals companies have to comply with the standards?

A. No, the standards are voluntary, so you can feel confident that companies that choose to comply take customer service seriously. If an organization claims to comply with the standards, then doesn't, it is a misrepresentation and can be reported to Trading Standards.

Q. How do I know whether my remover is following the standards?

A. Once a company has signed up to the standards, it can choose to 'self-assess' or employ an external auditor, preferably evaluated by a UKAS-accredited certification body (BSI with its Kitemark® scheme, see kitemark.com, is one example), to check that it complies. Before you sign a contract with a remover, ask for written confirmation that it meets the standards and how compliance was assessed.

Q. How do I complain about a remover?

A. Always contact the company first, to give it an opportunity to put things right. If you are still unhappy, you can contact the trade association that the remover belongs to, for example the British Association of Removers or the National Guild of Removers and Storers. If you need any advice about making a complaint, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Q. Where can I find a copy of BS EN 12522-1 and BS EN 12522-2?

A. Your local public library may be able to help you access a reference copy, or you can buy a copy from BSI at shop.bsigroup.com

Useful information

British Standards (BSI)

020 8996 9001

www.bsigroup.com

British Association of Removers

www.bar.co.uk

Citizens Advice

www.adviceguide.org.uk/consumer

Kitemark scheme

www.kitemark.com/kitemark-4-u/

National Guild of Removers and Storers

www.ngrs.co.uk

Trading Standards

www.tradingstandards.gov.uk



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