

Federal Advisory Committee for Household Goods Consumer Protection
Brochure Subgroup Teleconference
Meeting Minutes for April 26, 2017 2:00pm – 3:00pm EST

The Federal Advisory Committee for Household Goods (HHG) Consumer Protection Brochure Subgroup was convened for a teleconference at 2:00pm EST on Wednesday, April 26, 2017.

Working Group Members Present:

John Esparza – President & CEO, Texas Trucking Association
Andrew Friedman – Vice President, 1-800-Pack-Rat
Gabriel Meyer – Attorney Advisor, US Surface Transportation Board
Scott Michael – President and CEO, American Moving & Storage Association
Heather Paraino (Chairwoman), Esq. – Senior Corporate Counsel, MoveRescue
Charles (Chuck) White, CAE, M.Ed. – Senior Vice President, International Association of Movers

FMCSA Support:

Monique Riddick – Lead Transportation Specialist and Assistant DFO, FMCSA
Kenneth Rodgers – Chief, Commercial Enforcement & Investigations Division and DFO, FMCSA

Volpe Support:

Dianne Gunther – Volpe Lead
Erin Lohrenz – Record Minutes
Julianne Schwarzer – Facilitator

1. Introduction

Kenneth (Ken) Rodgers, FMCSA, welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced the new group member, and provided a brief update.

- The March onsite meeting was canceled due to administrative issues.
- We are all set to move forward with the May meeting, pending the outcome of the budget crisis.
- Dan Veoni is no longer a member of the Working Group and has resigned from AMSA.
- Dan's position on the Working Group has been filled by Scott Michael, President and CEO of AMSA.
- Heather Paraino has taken over the role of chairwoman of this Working Group.
- Chuck has joined the Brochure Subgroup to provide further support in developing the recommendations.

Julianne Schwarzer, U.S. DOT Volpe Center, provided a brief agenda for this meeting and announced the upcoming onsite meeting schedule.

Upcoming Onsite Meetings:

- May 2-4
- June 27-29

2. Review of January Subgroup Discussions

Dianne Gunther of the U.S. DOT Volpe Center provided a summary of the January subgroup meetings. The presentation is included at the end of the meeting minutes.

Paperwork Subgroup January Recap:

1. *Rights and Responsibilities:*
 - Remove right to waive physical copy of the Rights and Responsibilities document.
 - Good place to include notice of tariff.
2. *Estimate:*
 - Possibility to include tariff, arbitration, and program procedure in estimate.
 - Eliminate the practice of amending the estimate.
 - Question: should estimates be required to be binding?
 - Question: include date spreads on the estimate?
3. *Order for Service:*
 - Move critical pieces of order for service to the estimate.
4. *Remaining documents:*
 - Bill of lading – keep, but simplify.
 - Freight bill – could eliminate, often combined with bill of lading.
 - Inventory – needs more discussion; could waive or eliminate.
 - High value inventory – want to keep it but find better ways to provide to consumers – add to bill of lading.
5. *General recommendations:*
 - Modernize paperwork requirements.
 - Change physical inspections to visual inspections (which would allow for both physical and virtual inspections).

Education Subgroup January Recap:

The Education Subgroup established three focus areas:

1. *What is the overall message?*
 - Grab attention quickly with an acronym or infographic with a catchy phrase.
 - Think less about specifics and more about strategy.
 - We want to move away from the negative shock value approach.
 - It is better to highlight “good guy” reputations.
2. *Who is the target audience?*
 - Individuals experiencing life events.
 - Specific age groups.
 - Interstate movers as well as international movers.

3. *How do we reach the audience?*

- Utilize modern educational tools, different platforms including social media, using Google Analytics during moving season and year round.
- Series of podcasts.
- Videos and texting.
- Ombuds office.
- Event-driven outreach – bridal shows, assisted living events.
- Using an infographic.

Established recommendations:

- Develop an education plan that focuses on the three key areas.
- Use Google Analytics to help consumers find exactly what they are looking for.
- Provide funding for Google Analytics year round.

Brochure Subgroup January Recap:

Key messages to relay to consumer:

- Verify that your mover is licensed by FMCSA.
- Make sure your mover has a good reputation.
- Before moving day, have your mover visit your residence (or storage location) to visually inspect your goods and prepare a written estimate.
- Properly insure your goods.

These messages may need to be modified based on recommendations from the other subgroups (e.g., “have your mover visit your residence” may need to be changed to accommodate the recommendation to allow virtual surveys.)

Questions for discussion:

- Should the brochure be a traditional format or another format?
- What is the method of delivery?
- How does the brochure fit into the education plan?
- Should we change the name from “Ready to Move?” to something else?

3. Brainstorming Exercise: Subgroup Objectives

Julianne: We need to identify the goals and objectives of this subgroup based on the following instructions from Congress:

“Recommendations developed by the working group shall include recommendations on:

- Condensing publication ESA 03005 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration into a format that is easily used by consumers.”

Members of the Working Group offered the following comments in response to the brainstorming exercise:

- Note that the “publication” in reference (ESA 03005) is the “Ready to Move?” brochure.
- The language in the FAST Act seems to indicate that the publication is not currently being used much by consumers.
- It does not necessarily mean that consumers are not reading it, but that they are not digesting it. The Working Group needs to make this a more digestible format.
- When the subgroup talked before they agreed that all the information in the brochure was helpful but it was too much information.
- It is important to narrow it down to key pieces of information. For some of the information discussed this is provided to the consumer in several other places – many companies put it in the appendix of other documents.
- Maybe this document could link to some other place with the details.
- We can make this fit into whichever format is most valuable and helpful.

Monique Riddick of FMCSA noted that FMCSA does not provide the brochure in hard copy form any longer. It is only available electronically on the “Protect Your Move” website. The mover is required to give the pamphlet to the customer either in hard copy or some other format.

The subgroup continued their discussion:

- One goal of this subgroup could be to motivate consumers to use a legitimate professional mover and not a rogue, unlicensed company.
- One issue I have come across is that even some licensed carriers are not “good guys.” Licensing alone is not a sufficient basis to assume everything is legitimate. We need to take note of a few things:
 - Length of time they have had their license (“bad guys” may get a new license every other year)
 - Mover needs to have an excellent reputation

Schwarzer asked when the document is given to consumer, and if the goal is to help the consumer make an informed decision about which mover to select, or to provide some criteria with which to judge the mover they are currently working with before making a final decision.

- The mover is required to provide the “Ready to Move?” brochure along with the estimate before the move is booked.
- The Rights and Responsibilities must be given to the consumer before the order for service is signed. “Ready to Move?” is a shorter version.
- One interpretation is that the goal is to help the consumer make an informed decision on licensing and quality; the critical piece is providing criteria for them to review before they make their final decision.
- The brochure is also available on numerous websites – consumers could find it earlier in the process, before the mover provides it.

- There is a lot of overlap between the subgroups; the whole idea is to find ways to get the pertinent info into the hands of the public as early as possible.
- There is a paragraph that must be printed on estimates regarding valuation about where to access the “Ready to Move?” pamphlet online. Something similar to this could be added to the pamphlet referencing a more detailed document.
- What are the attributes of a positive mover? Starting with a good mover is most important.
- The consumer needs to know whether they are dealing with a mover or a broker. The vast majority of complaints describe the fact that the consumer booked with a broker and they didn’t know who they were doing business with.
 - What is the value of using a broker?
 - It can be a legitimate business practice. The Working Group’s goal is not to place judgment or discourage consumers from using a broker. Rather, the goal should be to provide information to the consumer so that they know who they are working with.
 - Need to make sure the consumer understands up front what a broker can do vs. what a mover can do.
- Does the Working Group need to focus on specific information or the strategy? Are they supposed to write the brochure or provide strategic perspective on how to put this together?
- Does the Working Group need to decide the proper form — a small trifold or something easily convertible into another platform?
- The intent of the brochure was to summarize the key elements of other publications.
- It is available on the FMCSA website, but it is not currently being used widely by consumers.
- It is currently required to be given to the consumer in writing (either a hard copy or an electronic copy), along with the estimate.

4. Potential Recommendations Discussion

Riddick noted that the group does not necessarily have to rewrite the brochure, but recommendations should generally include what topics to eliminate or add. The brochure could also possibly provide guidance about where to find further information.

Rodgers noted that the Working Group is allowed to recommend no changes to the brochure, or minimal changes, if they find that the current brochure is acceptable as is.

Heather Paraino also noted that one option could be to eliminate the brochure altogether if the information can be found elsewhere.

Riddick noted that the Working Group should keep in mind that the brochure is where the consumer receives their initial information about selecting a mover.

Working Group members noted:

- The guidance on reducing the pamphlet has been captured pretty well.

- John Esparza shared an email with a few examples of documents that the Texas Trucking Association has used in the past. They might be helpful to highlight a handful of main items for the consumer to take into consideration.
- The current “Ready to Move?” document has so much writing – some people can read it without realizing what they are reading.

5. Other Items for Discussion

Schwarzer asked if there were other items that the group wanted to discuss during the call.

- It would be difficult going through every bulleted item on the call. It would be more beneficial to go through it as a group in person.
- Rodgers noted that it would be best to continue the discussion during the breakout sessions at the onsite meeting.
- There is some overlap between this group and the Paperwork Subgroup, although this group is solely focused on the “Ready to Move?” brochure.
- The Brochure Subgroup will take this information back to the other groups to make sure it all fits together.

6. Next Steps

- Onsite meeting May 2-4.
- Rodgers noted that it was a good idea for the group to identify specific points to discuss during the breakout sessions at the onsite meeting to help develop the recommendations.

Adjournment:

The teleconference for the Brochure Subgroup of the National Advisory Council for Household Goods Consumer Protection was adjourned at 3:00pm on Wednesday, April 26, 2017.

Attachments:

1. Presentation: Household Goods Consumer Protection Working Group, Brochure Subgroup Meeting, April 26, 2017



Household Goods Consumer Protection Working Group

Brochure Subgroup Meeting

April 26, 2017





Welcome and Call to Order

- Kenneth Rodgers, Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
- Julianne Schwarzer, Facilitator





Working Group Timeline

- May 2-4, 2017 – Onsite Meeting
- June 27-29, 2017 – Onsite Meeting
- June 29 – August 1, 2017 – Wrap-up Recommendations
- August 1 – September 1, 2017 – Draft Report
- September 30, 2017 – Submit Report for Concurrence Approval





Meeting Agenda

- Review of January subgroup discussions
- Brainstorming exercise
 - Clarify subgroup objectives
- Continue discussions to make progress towards recommendations





Review of January Subgroup Discussions





Paperwork





Paperwork Subgroup

- Current Required Documents:
 - Rights and Responsibilities
 - Estimate
 - Order for Service
 - Bill of Lading
 - Inventory
 - Freight Bill
 - Invoice





Paperwork Subgroup

- Rights and Responsibilities
 - Remove requirement to waive right to physical copy
 - Could be further streamlined
 - This is a topic for further discussion
 - May want to recommend that these changes wait until the rulemaking is final
 - Could include notice of tariff





Paperwork Subgroup

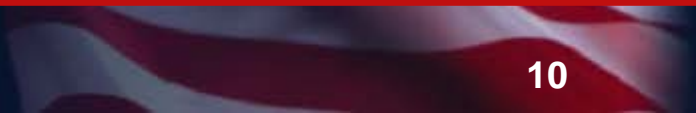
- Estimate - Recommendations
 - Tariff, arbitration program, and complaint procedure could be included
 - General consensus from carriers is that consolidating these required documents is beneficial
 - Eliminate practice of amending the estimate (“checkbox” loophole)
 - Require a new estimate prior to load





Paperwork Subgroup

- Estimate – Questions for Discussion
 - Should we require all estimates to be binding?
 - Non-binding estimates are rarely used, and create problems for consumers
 - What do carriers and other stakeholders think?
 - Should date spreads be included in the estimate?
 - Many consumers don't know the exact date they are moving
 - Pricing is related to dates





Paperwork Subgroup

- Order for service
 - Eliminate this requirement
 - Cross-reference information from the order for service with the estimate to see if there anything critical that would be missing





Paperwork Subgroup

- Other recommendations for modernization
 - Allow carriers to provide these documents electronically
 - “Physical inspection” should be changed to “visual inspection”
 - Allows for the use of virtual, video-based inspections





Paperwork Subgroup

Remaining Documents (discussed during the in-person meeting):

- Bill of Lading
 - Keep but simplify
- Freight Bill
 - Most carriers combine with bill of lading
 - Potentially eliminate this requirement
- Inventory
 - Needs more discussion
 - Potentially eliminate or provide a way for shippers to waive
- High Value Inventory
 - Important – it protects carriers and consumers
 - Keep this but find better ways to get it to consumers
 - Possibly add it to the bill of lading





Education





Education Subgroup

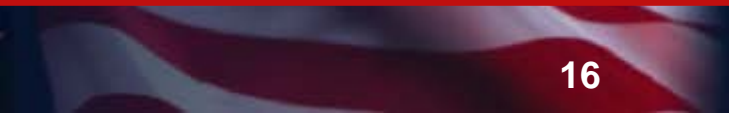
- Three focus areas:
 - What is our overall education message/strategy?
 - Who is our target audience?
 - How are we going to reach this audience?





Education Subgroup

- What is our overall education message/strategy?
 - Grab attention quickly
 - STOP acronym
 - Use graphics – traffic light or red flags
 - Catchy phrases - “Think before you leap”
 - Utilize “negative shock” messaging to grab attention
 - Highlight the reputations of the “good guys” while also scaring consumers with the “bad guys”





Education Subgroup

- Who is our target audience?
 - Target individuals experiencing life events (marriage, new job, retirement, etc)
 - Consider targeting specific age groups
 - Interstate movers only or also international movers?





Education Subgroup

- How are we going to reach this audience?
 - Utilize modern educational tools
 - Social media (i.e., Facebook, Twitter)
 - Take advantage of the HHG Protect Your Move (PYM) website
 - Utilize Google analytics year-round (not just during moving season)
 - A series of podcasts that brings someone through the moving process
 - Videos
 - Texting
 - Ombuds office?
 - Event-driven outreach
 - Bridal shows, open houses, assisted living events, partner with realty groups
 - Infographic





Education Recommendations To Date

- Request that FMCSA develop an education plan that meets specific requirements determined by the working group and focuses on the three key areas:
 - What is the overall message?
 - Who is the target audience?
 - How do we reach that audience?
- Utilize Google analytics to enable consumers to find the necessary information (PYM, social media accounts, etc)
- Provide funding to allow for Google analytics throughout the year, not just during peak moving season





Brochure





Brochure Subgroup

- Draft brochure key messages:
 - Verify that your mover is licensed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
 - Make sure your mover has a good reputation
 - Before moving day, have your mover visit your residence (or storage location) to visually inspect your goods and prepare a written estimate
 - Properly insure your goods





Brochure Subgroup

- Questions for discussion
 - Should it be a traditional brochure or some other format?
 - What should be the method of delivery?
 - How does the brochure fit into the overall education plan?
 - What should it look like?
 - Consider changing the name from “Ready to Move?” to something catchier





Brainstorming Exercise





Exercise: Subgroup Objectives

The recommendations developed by the working group shall include recommendations on—

- **(A) condensing publication ESA 03005 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration into a format that is more easily used by consumers**
- (B) using state-of-the-art education techniques and technologies, including optimizing the use of the Internet as an educational tool; and
- (C) reducing and simplifying the paperwork required of motor carriers and shippers in interstate transportation.





Discussion

