

Relocation Frequently Asked Questions Moving to Chile

It is recognized that moving is a stressful circumstance at best. The more relocation information you have ahead of time the better prepared you will be to have a successful relocation. This means that the more questions you ask ahead of time the less likely it is that there will be misunderstandings. No two organizations are exactly alike when it comes to relocations. The National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) is a Federally Funded Research and Development Center. As such, it is subject to numerous Government regulations and guidelines. In some cases this means the Observatory is limited in what it can provide or how it provides relocation assistance. Therefore, please take time to review this FAQ to acquaint you with the relocation processes at the NRAO.

This collection of frequently asked questions (FAQs) is written to cover a wide spectrum of relocation scenarios. Since each move has different constraints and requirements you are encouraged to read through these FAQs and then contact the Relocation Coordinator for additional guidance. Although there are many FAQs relating to Chile relocations, the general guidelines of this FAQ section are consistent across the Observatory.

Contacts

Who is my contact for arranging a household relocation?

For Green Bank, Charlottesville, and Chile-bound moves your Relocation Coordinator is Nicole Thisdell in Charlottesville at 434.296.0221 or via email at nthisdel@nrao.edu.

Relocation benefits

How do I know what relocation benefits I am eligible for?

Your offer letter should clearly state the benefits. If you have any questions about your benefits please call or email the relocation contact listed in your offer letter and your relocation authorization form, if provided.

What if there is a disagreement about my relocation benefits? Can the relocation contact change the offer letter terms?

Clarifications to the relocations benefits can usually be addressed by the Relocation Coordinator and will be confirmed in email format. If the change requested is beyond a clarification then the change must be addressed to the NRAO Human Resources for consideration. In all cases, any change authorized by Human Resources will be made by email or in writing. A verbal change is not authorized.

What if I do not relocate at the time of my NRAO employment? Is there a time limitation on the relocation benefit?

The relocation benefit is good for up to one year. You may request an extension of the benefit through Human Resources.

Moving company

Can I be reimbursed for moving myself in a rental truck?

Yes. Be sure to save all of your receipts for the truck, fuel, and packing materials including blankets, boxes, tape, etc.

Who does the NRAO use for a relocation company?

The NRAO generally uses United Van Lines and its affiliates for Charlottesville, Green Bank, and Chile relocations. Mayflower Transit and its affiliates are utilized for Socorro relocations.

Who contacts the mover to get my relocation started? The Relocation Coordinator will contact the mover to establish your benefits and relay information about your move. Most communications are conducted via email to ensure an audit trail.

What information does the Relocation Coordinator need to provide to the relocation company?

As a minimum, the following information is needed:

1. Current address of the household goods.
2. Contact information, including cell phone and preferred email.
3. Desired date for pack-up.
4. Any special needs such as unusually large items.
5. Prospective address, if known.

Will the moving company visit my house or apartment first before packing, or do they just come and figure it out when they arrive? Typically a moving company representative will conduct an on-site visit to determine the estimated weight and cube of your household goods. In cases where the household goods shipment is relatively small, a phone interview may be conducted in lieu of an on-site visit.

What if I want to ship my vehicle(s) rather than drive them to the new location? How is this handled? If I do this, can I be reimbursed for use of rental cars?

Consult your offer letter. Relocations within the continental United States do not generally offer relocation of vehicles. If you are moving from outside of the continental US, the relocation company will ship the vehicle, if authorized in the offer letter. Rental cars are generally authorized in cases where vehicle shipment is involved.

The Pack-out and Move

Will I need to pack things beforehand, or do they do all the packing?

The movers will do the packing.

Do I need to disassemble my furniture?

No, the movers will do that for you. Any furniture you want to have disassembled should be identified during the household goods survey with the moving company representative to ensure the proper time is allotted and tools are brought.

Do I need to disconnect my appliances?

This is an item you want to discuss during the household goods survey with the moving company representative. Disconnecting of gas lines and hard wired electrical service is generally not included.

What if I want to pack some of my own goods?

You may pack whatever you want however you should be aware that the moving company will label those items as “packed by owner” (PBO). This designation will reduce your ability to obtain reimbursement if the item is broken in transit.

Are my belongings insured during transit, and what is covered by this insurance?

Yes, you are covered by replacement value insurance that includes loss, breakage, water damage, etc. The mover has the option to repair, replace with like kind item, or pay the replacement value. There is generally a limitation of \$75,000 on the lot of household goods shipped. Individuals may increase the coverage, if desired, but at their own expense. Contact your Relocation Coordinator to discuss the option and pricing.

Are there any restrictions on the type of goods and materials I can have moved?

In general, you should not pack liquids, perishable foods, flammable liquids, or any form of explosive. If you have a question about particular items please contact your Relocation Coordinator.

After the move

What if there is damage to my shipment? The moving company has a form to complete and specific instructions for filing a claim.

What if I think my claim is not being handled properly by the moving company? Call or email the relocation coordinator with the specifics of your concern. He or she will work with the moving company to resolve your claim.

What forms do I need to submit to settle my travel claim?

The NRAO website has the form you need to complete. See http://www.nrao.edu/administration/fiscal_office/travelforms.shtml for the Relocation Expense Voucher. You can also request an emailed version of the form from the relocation coordinator.

Is there assistance available for completing the Relocation Expense Voucher?

The Relocation Coordinator is usually the person you will meet with or send your paper work to. To ensure you receive the correct reimbursement, do not send your Relocation Expense Voucher to Fiscal without having it reviewed by the Relocation Coordinator.

What information do I need to complete the Relocation Expense Voucher?

You will need to have all of your receipts for transportation, lodging, passport processing, and reciprocity tax for Chile entry. If you are making a self-move, you will also need receipts for the moving truck, fuel, and materials purchased such as tape, boxes, blankets, etc.

Are there tax consequences to my relocation?

If you refer to the Relocation Expense Voucher, you will notice that it is divided into two sides. All of the expenses on the left side are not taxable. These include your moving related personal car mileage rate, transportation costs, one day of lodging en route, and any moving costs you may have paid if you made a self move. All of the costs on the right side of the Relocation Expense Voucher are taxable items. These items include per diem, temporary housing, and other items that may be incorporated into the offer letter.

Will I be reimbursed for my personal vehicle mileage and what is the rate? For moves within the United States, vehicle mileage is reimbursed at the rate allowed by the Internal Revenue Service as identified in chapter 4 of IRS Publication 463 and related IRS information releases. One part of the rate is specifically identified as move-related mileage and the other part is the standard mileage reimbursement rate.

The NRAO will reimburse for the full general mileage rate however it will be split into two sections to conform to tax regulations. For example, if the standard mileage rate is 58.5 cents per mile and the move-related rate is 27 cents per mile, the reimbursement will be divided into components of 27 cents and 31.5 cents for each mile travelled in the private vehicle. When entered on the Relocation Expense Voucher, the 27 cent rate will be used on the left side of the form and the 31.5 cent rate will be used on the right side of the form.

Be aware that these rates change annually, and sometimes more frequently, as determined by the IRS.

Why does NRAO collect tax for the right-side items and what is the tax rate?

The NRAO is required by Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations to collect tax for all taxable relocation reimbursements. The tax rate is set at 25% by the IRS. This is not a negotiable item with NRAO Fiscal or the Relocation Coordinator since this is public law.

How do I receive my reimbursements?

For the items listed on the left side of the Relocation Expense Voucher, the non-taxable items, a check will be sent to you directly. This check typically arrives within ten work days of filing your Relocation Expense Voucher. For the items listed on the right side of the Relocation Expense Voucher, the taxable items, you will receive this reimbursement through your next payroll check. If the Relocation Expense Voucher is submitted very close to the end of a pay period, the reimbursement may not be processed in time to be included in the next pay check. In those cases, the reimbursement will arrive in the following or second pay check.

If I am given a maximum dollar amount for my relocation and I exceed the allowance, how is this handled?

You are responsible for any costs in excess of the authorized allowance. Consult with Human Resources if this circumstance presents itself.

If my household goods weight exceeds my allowance, how is this handled?

You are responsible for any costs in excess of the authorized allowance. Consult with Human Resources if this circumstance presents itself.

What if I need to stay in temporary housing longer than planned because I can't locate permanent housing?

Contact your Human Resources representative to discuss the situation. There are tax implications and allowability of cost standards for housing allowances that exceed the authorized stay. These limits are based on IRS regulations and Office of Management and Budget Circular A-122, neither of which is within the control of the NRAO.

Am I eligible for storage of my household goods if I haven't found a new residence?

Consult your offer letter. If the offer letter does not explicitly state that storage is authorized then you need to contact Human Resources to obtain a change to the offer letter. The Relocation Coordinator is not authorized to make offer letter changes.

Does my benefit including transporting my pets or animals? Are there any other exclusions?

Pets, animals, and boats are not authorized to be relocated at Observatory expense. Consult with your Relocation Coordinator if you have other questions about what is and is not allowed to be relocated at Observatory expense.

Relocation to Chile

When should I be contacting the Relocation Coordinator?

Due to the complexities of international moves, you should contact your Relocation Coordinator as soon as you receive your offer letter.

Is there any information I can obtain about what to expect when relocating to Chile?

Employees being relocated to Chile will be provided with a copy of “INSTRUCTIONS FOR RELOCATION TO CHILE FOR ALMA NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL STAFF MEMBERS” which is produced by the ALMA Chile Office. This document is filled with vital information about relocation, customs clearance, allowances, vehicle purchase, diplomatic status, and taxes.

Are there any restrictions on the type of goods and materials I can bring into Chile? No car or motorcycle importation is permitted. You should not pack liquids, perishable foods, and flammable liquids. If you have questions about a particular item, please contact your Relocation Coordinator.

How long does it take household goods to reach Chile?

In general, goods take about 4 – 6 weeks to arrive in Chile. Be aware that this is an average time and does not take into account the impact of weather related delays, labor strikes, or other factors outside the control of the shipper.

Who handles the importation of my shipment? For Chile relocations, Ward Van Lines is generally the agent in Chile that will import the shipment.

What happens to my goods if I do not have a house or apartment leased by the time the household goods arrive?

Your offer letter will specify the period of time that your goods can be stored.

What happens if my household goods are not delivered before my authorized per diem expires per my offer letter?

Call or email the Relocation Coordinator for review of your situation and consultation with Human Resources. Each situation is different so no specific guidance is available.

Who handles the importation of my shipment?

There are a number of movers in Chile that may be used to receive and deliver your household goods.

Do I need to provide an inventory of my household goods?

It is best to make a full inventory before the shipment of your household goods. Once your goods are in transit you may not have the full recollection of what comprised your household goods. As a precaution, it is also helpful to take a

video or digital picture tour of your household goods. If you are going to leave some of your household goods in storage it is also highly recommended that you make a detailed inventory for future reference.

What address do I use for an express shipment being sent to Chile?

Address the shipment to:

Associated Universities, Inc.
Apoquindo 3650
18th Floor
Las Condes, Santiago, Chile

Are there any delays I should expect when departing on an International flight from the United States?

You should be sure to arrive at the airport for international departure several hours before your flight. Aside from the routine hassle of clearing security you will also face additional scrutiny since you are leaving the US for an extended period of time. There have been reports of delays of up to an hour at the US departure point due to work visa issues. You will not have or be issued a work visa and it may take processing through several supervisors before you are cleared to board. Because you are going to Chile for more than a vacation period, the processing officials will want to be certain of your intent and status.

Is there anything about the Santiago customs clearance process I should be aware of?

The arrival process in Santiago has two phases. The first is immigration clearance and the second is customs clearance. Each has something to keep in mind.

Just prior to landing in Santiago and during the customs clearance process you will be warned in writing and verbally against bringing fruits, vegetables, and nuts into Chile. The Agriculture officials from the Servicio Agrícola Y Ganadero (SAG) are very serious about halting the importation of these goods and they aggressively monitor luggage and personal bags to detect the contraband. You can expect to have one or more SAG dogs sniff your bags as they come off the luggage carousel and during the time they are in the luggage claim area. Any luggage found to be carrying contraband can be confiscated and the owner fined. The bottom line is to heed the warnings, be cooperative with the inspectors, and rid yourself of any contraband using the containers provided or leave it on the airplane.

Are there any items that are difficult or expensive to obtain in Chile?

Based on recent experience, the following items are considered difficult to obtain and you should give some thought to shipping extra quantities in your household goods shipment. These items include: washcloths, small, inexpensive smoke detectors, and books in English.

How do I establish banking in Chile?

As soon as you receive your Chilean identification card (known as the RUT card), you need to start working on a checking account and bank-related activities. This process can be time-consuming and may require more than one application to get your banking activities in order.

Pets

Can I bring cats or dogs with me to Chile?

Yes, but you must follow the importation regulations. These include:

1. The pet owner must provide a certificate from a veterinarian in the United States that certifies that the cat or dog has an up-to-date rabies vaccine, parvovirus, distemper, and antiparasites.
2. The airline will ask for a transporter box without water, without food, and fasting.
3. As a recommendation, pet owners are encouraged to sedate their pet to make the trip more successful. Also, including a cushion/pillow with the owner's scent also helps to relax the traveling pet.

Always consult with your family veterinarian regarding the best way to prepare your pet for transit.

Will my vet have the correct importation form for my pet?

To ensure a smooth relocation and minimize turmoil at customs, you are asked to use the form located on this web page. There is a fair amount of confusion between US vets, the USDA, SAG, and the Chilean customs officials. We will continue to monitor the situation and update the form as the situation dictates.

Do all airlines handle pets in the same way?

Each airline has its own processes and procedures for pets. It is best to contact the airline well ahead of time to ensure you have the correct container and make the correct arrangements. Be sure to ask the airline representative whether or not you should bring a supply of food, water, and dishes for your pet's transit. Based on the few experiences so far, the only consistent point is that the airlines are very inconsistent about what can and cannot be done to accommodate your pet. Be aware too that the cost to transport your pet can vary dramatically between airlines.

Will I have access to my pet immediately upon arrival at the Santiago airport?

The customs clearance process for your pet may take several hours. The limited experience we have had so far indicates that your pet will be required to stay in its carrier during the clearance process. You be permitted to visit with him/her during this processing time.

What pet supplies are available in Santiago?

Chile is a very dog-friendly country, but not as much for cats. There are many kinds of dog food and treats, but only about four kinds of cat food and no treats at all. If your cat is used to a certain kind of food, meaning canned food, bring some with you and put some in your shipment. If it is canned, it should be okay.