BILL'S HOME TECH

Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

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Military Family Tech: Moving Without Losing Your Digital Life

A PCS tech checklist: back up, update every address, keep it all intact

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

Bill Davis — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · bill@billshometech.com · Atwater, Ohio

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1 The Whole Plan on One Page

A PCS move scrambles far more than your furniture. Behind the boxes and the truck sits a quiet second move nobody packs for: your digital life — the photos on your phone, the logins to your bank and your benefits, and the dozen companies that still think you live at your last duty station. Handle that second move with a little planning and nothing important gets lost.

Ignore it and you spend your first weeks at the new base chasing missing mail, locked accounts, and a benefits letter that went to an empty house.

The good news is that this is all ordinary, do-it-at-the-kitchen-table work. You do not need to be technical. You need a short list, a couple of evenings, and the discipline to do the backup before the movers touch anything. This guide gives you that list and walks each piece in plain English, in the order that keeps you covered the whole way through.

- Back up your photos and files first — before a single box is taped shut.
- Make one master list of every address and account that has to change.
- Update the official records that drive your pay and benefits: DEERS first, then VA.gov.
- Change your mailing address with USPS, your banks, and anyone who sends you money or bills.
- Keep your phone number — it is the key to half your logins — and protect your accounts while things are in motion.

> **TIP**
>
> If you remember only one thing, remember this: do the backup before the move, and update DEERS the moment your new address is real. Everything else can be caught up in the first week. Those two cannot.

2 Why a Move Puts Your Data at Risk

Nothing about a move is designed to lose your data, and yet it happens constantly. A phone goes in a jacket pocket and takes a tumble on moving day. A laptop rides in a box that gets dropped. A tablet with ten years of grandchildren's photos simply vanishes between the old house and the new one. None of these are rare, and every one of them is survivable — if the photos and files already live somewhere besides that one device.

The second risk is quieter and costs you later. Accounts you forget to update keep sending important things to the old address: a tax form, a benefits decision, a new debit card, a jury summons. By the time you notice, the mail-forwarding window has closed and a stranger is receiving your paper. A move is also prime time for scammers, who know military families are distracted and send fake 'confirm your moving details' messages. A little order up front defends against all three.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
> A device holds your data in one place. A backup holds it in a second place. The whole trick to never losing anything is simply making sure every irreplaceable thing lives in two places before the move — not one.

3 Building Your Tech Moving Kit

Before you touch a setting, gather the few things this whole process leans on and keep them together — a labeled folder, a zip pouch, whatever you will not lose. Carry this with you in the car on moving day; never let it ride in the truck. It is the single most valuable box you will pack, and it weighs almost nothing.

1. Your phone and its charger, fully charged, plus a spare battery pack if you have one.
2. A written list of your important logins — or better, the one password you use to open your password manager.
3. Your military ID (CAC), your DEERS information, and your sponsor's details.

4. One external hard drive or a USB stick large enough to hold your photos, as a backup you can hold in your hand.
5. A small notebook and pen for confirmation numbers, names, and 'call them back on' dates.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Never pack your phone, your external drive, or your login folder in the moving truck. If the truck is late, lost, or damaged, you still need to function — and those items are how you do it.

4 Backing Up Your Photos and Files — Do This First

This is the step people skip and regret. Your photos and your documents are the only truly irreplaceable things on your devices; a lost app can be reinstalled, but a lost photo of a child who is now grown is gone for good. Before the movers come, get every photo and every important file into a second home. The easiest second home is the cloud, and you very likely already pay for a corner of it.

1. On an iPhone, turn on iCloud Photos (Settings, tap your name, iCloud, Photos) and let it finish uploading on Wi-Fi. On Android, open Google Photos, tap your picture, and turn on Backup.
2. Confirm it actually finished — the app will say 'Backup complete' or show how many items are left. Do not start the move until it does.
3. Copy your documents folder, scanned records, and tax files to the same cloud account, or drag them onto your external drive.
4. For real peace of mind, do both: cloud and a physical drive you carry in the car. That is two copies in two places.

> **WATCH OUT**
> Free cloud storage fills up fast with photos. If you get a 'storage full' warning, the extra tier is usually a couple of dollars a month — cheap insurance for a lifetime of pictures during the one month you most risk losing them.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

5 Listing Every Address to Change

The heart of a clean digital move is one honest list of everyone who needs your new address. Make it once, work it down, and nothing slips. The mistake is trusting your memory: there are always more accounts than you think, because modern life quietly spreads your address across dozens of companies. Spend twenty minutes building the list and you will save yourself months of chasing.

Group	Who belongs here
Official / military	DEERS, VA.gov, TRICARE, your branch's pay system (myPay / MyNavy / etc.), the VA for any benefits
Money	Every bank, credit union, credit card, loan, and investment account
Government	USPS forwarding, IRS, your state DMV and voter registration, Social Security if applicable
Home & bills	New and old utilities, insurance (auto, home/renters, life), phone and internet
Everyday	Amazon and other shopping, prescription pharmacy, subscriptions that ship anything

GOOD TO KNOW

Go through your last month of email and your bank statement line by line. Every company that emailed you a receipt or charged your card is one that may have your old address on file. That sweep catches the accounts memory misses.

6 Updating DEERS and Your Military Records

DEERS — the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System — is the master record for your family's military benefits, and almost everything else keys off it. If DEERS is wrong, your TRICARE can break, your ID renewals can snag, and official mail goes astray. So this is the first official update you make once your new address is real, not the last.

1. Update your address in DEERS through milConnect (milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil), signing in with your CAC, DS Logon, or a Login.gov / ID.me account.
2. Check that each family member's record shows the correct new address and that everyone's status is current.
3. If anything looks wrong or you cannot sign in, visit a local ID card office (RAPIDS) — an appointment is usually required, so book it early.
4. Once DEERS is right, confirm your TRICARE region, because moving across the country can move you from one TRICARE region to another and change how you book care.

WATCH OUT

Moving between regions can switch you from TRICARE Prime to Select or change your primary care setup. Do not assume your coverage followed you automatically — confirm it in milConnect and with TRICARE after the move.

7 Updating VA.gov and Your Benefit Accounts

If you or your spouse is a veteran or receives any VA benefit or care, VA.gov is now the one front door for all of it — health, disability compensation, education, home loan, the lot. Your address there drives where benefit letters, decisions, and payments go, so it belongs near the top of your list right behind DEERS.

1. Sign in at VA.gov with your Login.gov or ID.me account. (The VA retired the old My HealtheVet username-and-password and DS Logon sign-ins, so if you have not switched yet, you will set up one of those two.)
2. Open your profile and update your mailing and home address in one place — VA.gov pushes it to your connected benefit services.
3. Confirm your direct deposit is still the account you want, especially if you are changing banks with the move.
4. Check that your phone number and email are current, because that is how the VA reaches you about a claim or an appointment.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Last verified November 2026: VA.gov is the single sign-in for VA health and benefits, using Login.gov or ID.me. If a page still mentions My HealtheVet, it has simply moved under the VA.gov roof — the same tools, a new door.

8 Keeping Your Phone Number and Your Logins Working

Your phone number is quietly the master key to your digital life. When a bank, the VA, or your email wants to confirm it is really you, it texts a code to that number. Lose the number mid-move and you can lock yourself out of everything at the worst possible time. So the rule is simple: keep your existing cell number through the move. You almost never need to change it, even moving across the country.

- Do not cancel your cell service to 'save money during the move.' Keep the number live — it is receiving your security codes.

- If you switch carriers for better coverage at the new base, port (transfer) your existing number rather than taking a new one.
- Write down which accounts text codes to your phone, so if the number ever must change, you know what to update first.
- Set up a backup way in — a second email or printed recovery codes — for your most important accounts, in case a code does not arrive.

> **TIP**
>
> Change your phone number only if you truly must. If you do, update your bank, your email, the VA, and DEERS with the new number right away, because those codes are how you prove who you are.

9 Changing Your Mailing Address the Smart Way

A USPS mail-forwarding order is your safety net, not your plan. Forwarding catches the mail you forgot to update, but it is temporary — generally about a year for first-class mail, less for magazines — and it does not move everything. Set it up so nothing falls through the cracks while you work your list, but do not lean on it as the fix.

1. File a change of address with USPS at usps.com (there is a small card-verification fee online — a dollar or two) or free at the post office. Beware look-alike sites that charge much more.
2. Pick your start date to begin the day before you leave the old place, so there is no gap.
3. While forwarding runs, actually update the real address at each account on your list — forwarding is the net, the updates are the fix.
4. Tell the people who matter directly: family, your sponsor or unit, and anyone who mails you something time-sensitive.

> **WATCH OUT**
>
> Only usps.com is the official site. Searches surface copycat 'change of address' sites that charge $40 or more for the free service. If a site wants a big fee, you are on the wrong one — back out.

Rather not do this yourself? I'll come to your home and set it up for you — a flat $99 first visit across Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities. Outside the area? I also help remotely by phone or screen-share. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042.

10 Banks, Bills, and Anything That Sends You Money

Money accounts deserve their own careful pass, because a wrong address here means a new debit card, a tax form, or a benefits payment landing somewhere you cannot reach. Many military families bank with institutions built for them — like USAA or Navy Federal — that are well practiced at PCS moves, but the address update is still on you.

- Update your address with every bank, credit union, and credit card, even ones you rarely use — that is where a replacement card gets mailed.
- Confirm your direct deposit and autopay still point to the right account if you are changing banks.
- Update investment, retirement, and loan accounts so tax forms arrive in the new year.
- Tell your insurers (auto, renters or home, life) promptly — a new state can change your auto rates and even what coverage is required.

GOOD TO KNOW

Moving to a new state can change your car insurance requirements and your registration deadline. Call your insurer before you drive the moving miles, not after, so you are covered the whole way.

11 Setting Up Technology at the New Place

Arriving is its own small tech project. Getting your internet, your Wi-Fi, and your devices settled quickly turns the new house into home and gets your family back online for school, work, and staying in touch with the family you left behind. A little order here saves a week of frustration.

1. Arrange internet before you arrive if you can — on base, ask housing who the provider is; off base, schedule installation a few days after move-in so it is ready.
2. Set up your Wi-Fi router, give the network a name and a strong password, and reconnect your phones, tablets, and TVs.
3. Sign back into your streaming and shopping accounts and update the address stored in each.
4. Check that your photo backup is still running on the new Wi-Fi so the stream of new pictures never stops.

> **WATCH OUT**
> If the new place has thick walls or is larger than your last home and the Wi-Fi does not reach a back bedroom, a simple mesh system or an extender fixes it. Do not suffer dead spots — that is an easy, inexpensive fix.

12 Scams That Target Families on the Move

Scammers read the calendar. They know PCS season floods families with real moving messages, and they slip fakes into the stream: a text about a 'delivery issue' with your household goods, an email to 'reconfirm your DEERS address,' a call claiming your benefits are suspended unless you verify now. The distraction of a move is exactly what they count on. Slow down and the fakes fall apart.

If you get...	The safe move
A text about a package or move 'problem' with a link	Do not tap it. Go to the carrier's or mover's own site or app directly.

A call saying your benefits or pay will stop today	Hang up. Call DEERS, the VA, or your pay office using the official number.
An email asking you to 'verify' your DEERS or VA login	Do not click. Type milconnect or VA.gov into the browser yourself.
Anyone demanding payment by gift card or wire	It is a scam, every time. No real agency takes a gift card.

WATCH OUT

No real military, VA, or government office will ask you to confirm your identity by clicking a link in a text, or take payment in gift cards. When in doubt, hang up and call the number you look up yourself.

13 A Simple Timeline That Keeps You Covered

Order matters more than speed. If you do these in roughly the right sequence, you are never exposed: your data is safe before the risk, and your money and benefits are redirected before the mail starts arriving at the new place. Here is a timeline that has worked for family after family. Adjust the dates to your orders, but keep the order of operations.

- Two to three weeks out: build your master list, back up photos and files, and arrange internet at the new place.
- One week out: file USPS forwarding, start updating banks and the big accounts, and confirm the backup finished.
- Moving day: carry your phone, drive, and login folder in the car — never the truck.
- First week at the new base: update DEERS, then VA.gov, confirm TRICARE, and finish any accounts still on the old address.

> *Do the backup before the move and update DEERS the moment your new address is real — everything else can be caught up in week one.*

14 Recap

A PCS move does not have to cost you a single photo, a locked account, or a lost benefits letter. The whole thing comes down to a short, ordered list: protect your data before the risk, redirect your money and benefits before the mail, keep the phone number that unlocks everything, and stay calm against the scams that bloom in moving season. None of it is technical. All of it is doable at the kitchen table over a couple of evenings.

- Back up photos and files first — two copies, two places.
- Update DEERS first among official records, then VA.gov, then confirm TRICARE.
- Keep your cell number; it is the key to your logins.
- File USPS forwarding as the net, and update each real account as the fix.
- Slow down on any urgent 'verify now' message — that is how scams get in.

> **GOOD TO KNOW**
>
> Last verified November 2026. VA.gov is the single sign-in for VA health and benefits via Login.gov or ID.me, and DEERS updates run through milConnect. If any step feels fuzzy, that is on the writing, not on you — call Bill at (330) 200-8042.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy. It points you straight to what to do for each task.

I want to...	Do this...
Protect my photos first	Turn on iCloud or Google Photos backup and wait for 'Backup complete' before moving
Carry the essentials safely	Keep phone, external drive, and login folder in the car — never the truck
Update my military record	Change your address in DEERS through milConnect before anything else official
Update VA benefits	Sign in at VA.gov with Login.gov or ID.me and update your address once
Keep my logins working	Keep your existing cell number so security codes still reach you
Catch stray mail	File USPS forwarding only at usps.com, then update each account for real
Protect my money	Update every bank and card so new cards and tax forms follow you
Spot a moving scam	Never click 'verify' links or pay by gift card; call the official number
Get help	Call Bill: (330) 200-8042

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.

HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

You don't have to remember all of it — just that a friendly, patient person is one call away, whenever you'd rather have a hand.

KEY SPECS

In your home — $99 flat for the first visit, no contracts and no surprises, with a 30-day come-back-free follow-up. In-home visits cover Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities.
Outside the area? Remotely — $49 for a screen-share session (free for Support Plan members, $39/mo), refundable if I can't fix it — and credited toward a visit if you'd rather have me in person. Book either at billshometech.com/book.

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full $99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Whenever you're ready, I'll come to your home anywhere in Portage County, Ohio and nearby communities, at your pace. Too far for a house call? I also help remotely. Book at billshometech.com/book or call (330) 200-8042. — Bill

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