DATA CENTER RELOCATION EXPERTS

Data Center Relocation Checklist

How to move servers without downtime

A step-by-step planning guide for IT managers, facility teams and operations leaders.

7 phases • 50+ checkpoints • Printable

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How to use this checklist

A data center move is one of the riskiest projects an IT team takes on. Most problems come from gaps in planning, not from the truck ride. Work through these seven steps in order, assign an owner to each item, and check it off when it is done. Timelines below assume a mid-size move; larger or international moves need more lead time.

Step	Phase	Typical timing
1	Inventory & audit	8–12 weeks out
2	Choose a move strategy	8–10 weeks out
3	Backups & rollback plan	4–6 weeks out
4	Prepare the new site	4–6 weeks out
5	Packing & transport	Move week
6	Install, test & power-up	Move day +1–3
7	Retire old equipment	After go-live

STEP 1 Inventory & Audit

8–12 weeks before the move

- [ ] Build a full asset list: servers, storage arrays, network switches, firewalls, racks, PDUs and UPS units.
- [ ] Record make, model, serial number, rack and U position for every device.
- [ ] Photograph the front and back of every rack, including cabling.
- [ ] Label every cable at both ends and every device with its destination rack and U position.
- [ ] Map application dependencies — which systems must move together or come up in a set order.
- [ ] Note power and cooling needs (amps, voltage, plug types, BTUs) for each rack.
- [ ] Flag equipment that is end-of-life or no longer needed so it isn't moved at all.
- [ ] Collect vendor warranty and support contracts; check whether a move affects coverage.

> **Pro tip:** Moving hardware you plan to retire costs money twice. Decide what stays behind before you quote the move.

STEP 2 Choose a Move Strategy

8–10 weeks before the move

- [ ] **All at once:** everything moves in one maintenance window — fastest, but highest risk.
- [ ] **Phased:** move in groups over several windows — lower risk, longer timeline.
- [ ] **Lift and shift:** move racks fully loaded (rack-and-roll) to cut re-cabling time.
- [ ] **Swing / migrate:** stand up new or temporary gear and migrate data over the network first.
- [ ] Set the maintenance window(s) and get business sign-off on acceptable downtime.

- [ ] Name a move lead, an IT lead at each site and a single decision-maker for go / no-go calls.
- [ ] Write a communication plan: who gets notified before, during and after the move.

STEP 3 Backups & Rollback Plan

4–6 weeks before the move

- [ ] Run full, verified backups of every system — and test a restore, not just the backup job.
- [ ] Store a copy of backups off-site, separate from the equipment being moved.
- [ ] Export and save device configs (switches, firewalls, load balancers, storage controllers).
- [ ] Document IP addresses, VLANs, DNS records and anything that will change at the new site.
- [ ] Define rollback triggers: what failure means you stop and revert?
- [ ] Arrange spare drives, power supplies and cables for critical systems.
- [ ] Confirm vendor support contacts are on standby for move day.

> **Pro tip:** A backup you have never restored is a guess. Test at least one full restore before move week.

STEP 4 Prepare the New Site

4–6 weeks before the move

- [ ] Confirm rack space, floor load rating and clear paths (doors, elevators, ramps, dock height).
- [ ] Verify power circuits, plug types, UPS capacity and generator backup are installed and tested.
- [ ] Confirm cooling capacity matches the heat load of the incoming equipment.
- [ ] Have network carriers install and test circuits before move day — these can take weeks.
- [ ] Pre-install empty racks, cable trays, patch panels and labeling where possible.
- [ ] Arrange building access, security badges, loading dock time and any after-hours permits.
- [ ] Draw a floor plan showing exactly where each rack and device goes.

STEP 5 Packing & Transport

Move week

- [ ] Shut down systems in the planned order and confirm each one is fully powered off.
- [ ] Remove or secure hard drives as required by your data-security policy; log every drive.
- [ ] Use anti-static bags and custom foam or crating for loose servers and components.
- [ ] Secure rails, doors and side panels on racks moving fully loaded.
- [ ] Use air-ride suspension trucks and climate control to limit shock, vibration and condensation.
- [ ] Keep a signed chain-of-custody log from pickup to delivery, with seal numbers.
- [ ] Confirm cargo insurance covers the full replacement value of the equipment.

- [ ] For international moves: confirm customs paperwork, export rules and lead times in advance.

Pro tip: Let equipment acclimate to room temperature before powering on — cold hardware brought into a warm room can form condensation.

STEP 6 Install, Test & Power-Up

Move day and the 1–3 days after

- [ ] Unload, inspect for damage and photograph equipment before signing delivery paperwork.
- [ ] Rack each device in its labeled position and re-cable from your photos and labels.
- [ ] Power up in dependency order: network and storage first, then servers, then applications.
- [ ] Check every device for hardware alerts, failed drives or failed power supplies.
- [ ] Test connectivity, DNS, backups, monitoring and remote access.
- [ ] Have application owners sign off that each system works as expected.
- [ ] Keep the rollback plan ready until sign-off is complete.
- [ ] Hold a short review: what went well and what to change for the next phase.

STEP 7 Retire Old Equipment

After go-live

- [ ] List hardware that was decommissioned or replaced during the move.
- [ ] Wipe or physically destroy drives using a recognized data-sanitization standard.
- [ ] Get a certificate of data destruction for your compliance records.
- [ ] Recycle e-waste through a certified recycler — never send it to a landfill.
- [ ] Sell usable servers, storage, network gear, racks and UPS units to recover value.
- [ ] Update your asset register, licenses and support contracts to reflect what was retired.

Pro tip: Our **Equipment Buy Back Program** buys servers, storage, network gear, racks and UPS/power equipment — paid in cash or as credit toward your move.

Planning a data center move?

Data Center Relocation Experts handles domestic and international relocations — packing, air-ride transport, chain of custody and equipment buy back.

Call 866-216-7742 or request a free quote at **datacenterrelocationexperts.company**