

HandyWork Newsletter



Summer 1999

Happy Summer

What's New in HW-Windows

As the HWW system matures, there are fewer and fewer major changes or enhancements. Lately we have been into fine-tuning, which basically means speeding up certain options and clarifying procedures that users stumble over.

We've fine tuned Statements and also added a HCFA print image report for electronic claims that bypass the clearing houses

How to Upgrade

We post all changes to the HWW system on the HandyWorks website. You can find them on the bottom of the Download page in the section for registered users. Click on the link to automatically get the latest versions of HandyWorks. The file is in a password protected ZIP format.

If we have your email address, we will let you know when significant changes are posted. Users without web access are encouraged to get it. We offer a \$25 inducement credit off of your maintenance bill, if you have a valid email account that lets us send you files. (Sorry Hotmail and Juno accounts don't count).

Summer Vacation

The HandyWorks office will be closed August 30-Sept 4. There will be NO SUPPORT this week. Make sure you are backed up, and save your problems for when we return.

What's New in HW-DOS

HCFA forms printed with a bill date in the year 2000+ will print 4 digit dates for all claims. Currently, this is only done for Medicare and BCBS!

We will email this upgrade to all our email sites later this summer. If you need a disk, please call, write or fax us.

DOS to HWW Upgrade Offer

DOS users (now about 30% of total HandyWorks users) can upgrade to the Windows version for only \$750, which is half of its current retail price. All of your DOS data can be transferred over while leaving the DOS system intact and still perfectly usable. This low price offer is only available to DOS users who are current in their maintenance.

We recommend upgrading for many reasons. First, the Windows version is a much better program than DOS. DOS was put together over a 12 year period of time. Many of its major pieces, such as the Help System, Ledger Card, Vital Stats and Electronic Billing (to name a few) were added after the initial design period and work somewhat awkwardly. (That is why you need to F5 in End of Day.)

The Windows version, on the other hand, was completely designed before we started writing code. This

means that the Windows version is a seamless program encompassing all of the DOS features, just done a lot better.

On the support side, maintaining the Windows version is easier too. This is especially true for bill printing issues with routine HCFA, Medicare and BCBS changes easily implemented. Often times, we can help you make the change to the form printing routine, over the phone, in a matter of moments.

Remember that you lose none of the DOS features, yet gain a myriad of other benefits. For example, Windows supports HMO fixed dollar co-pays. Another great feature is the ability to make payments go to specific office visits. This helps track those "pesky" insurance errors in which they pay only part your bill. (We wonder if they skip visit dates on purpose, or they are simply incompetent).

For those of you who chose to remain with the DOS version, this is OK! We will continue to support the DOS system, and the DOS version is fully functional under any Windows environment. We understand that some offices are resistant to change from a system they are comfortable with to one that is "unknown".

Email info

While we still rely on the post office to deliver fixes and patches to a few users, most of you now let us do this by email. This easier for both of us. Please send your email address to us at Steve@HandyWorks.com.

Y2K - What's it all about

When I started programming in 1969, I worked on a mid size IBM machine, (IBM 1130) that had only 8K of memory and a disk storage system (disks the size of a car tire) that held 1.2 megabytes. In order to conserve space in storage and memory, dates were stored as mmddyy, taking up only 8 integer storage bytes. The saving of those 2 bytes by not representing the full year as yyyy was, at the time, both substantial and valuable.

Now, memory and storage costs are non issues, but old programs still maintain the 2 digit year format. Many of these programs will not work correctly when the calendar switches over to 2000.

There are so many old programs that no one is really sure what needs to be fixed. On the serious side, most of the mission critical systems in the IRS are not ready for the new millenium! Nor are they capable of checking the 62 million lines of code, some it written in assembly language, to fix the problem. What will happen is anybody's guess. Some see a doomsday scenario while others see minor glitches being fixed on a rolling basis as they are uncovered.

For HandyWorks Windows users, this problem is not a significant issue. DOS users still are on a 2 digit year format, but because the program does not calculate anything using those dates, it is not really a problem. When a 4 digit year needs to be printed, we look at the year date. If it is less than 5, we assume its 2000. If more than 5, its 1900. While not a perfect solution, we will hopefully get all of our remaining DOS users onto the Windows system within the next 5 years

DC-PowerNotes users are happy!

Several HWW users have been using the DC-PowerNotes system for the last month and they are very happy with how it works.

As a HandyWorks user, you are entitled to a discount in your PowerNotes purchase. Just make sure you tell Dr. Grieg or Dr. Hoyt you're a HWW user.

Virus Warnings

While all HandyWorks program files are non-infectible there are lots of other viruses floating around the internet these days. To avoid getting a viral infection, take the following precautions in practicing Safe Hex:

Never run a software program you get from the internet, unless you are sure it is virus free. Especially avoid free games. If you get internet software, make sure it is from a reliable vendor (like us).

Use caution in opening or running any attachments that come as part of an email. Do not open .doc files that are attached to an email without turning Macro's off in Microsoft Word.

Finally, install a virus checker program and have it work in real time. It may not catch everything, but it will stop a lot of what is already out there.

Backup Horror!

We have 2 stories this issue. Most recently, Dr. Jerry.I. in IL lost his demographics file. His most recent backup was 6 months earlier. He hadn't been backing up because he was having no problems and backing up was a hassle. I jokingly asked him if he'd cancelled his car insurance because he'd had no accidents.

Fortunately, we were able to partially recreate his patient file from existing bills, visits and payments so the loss wasn't that severe.

Dr. L.W. of Ohio is the winner of the **burned twice on a faulty backup** award. The first time was in late October on our DOS system. When he went to restore, the backup set was blank. So, we dutifully went over proper backup procedures and sent him a new system. In April, on our HWW version, a power outage occurred and he had to restore from his backup. The backup disk had errors on it and to make things worse, there was again, only one backup disk. So he was out of luck a second time. We hope you learn from these mistakes! So here it is, for the umteenth time, the right way to backup.

Proper Backup

Backup daily, or at least several times a week. Backup on different disks for different days, i.e. Monday's backup on Monday's disks, etc. This way, if you have bad data that you only just discovered, you can go back to a previous version. Also important is to do a compare or write verify to make sure what you wrote is what got wrote. And most important, make sure you are backing up the Handyworks data files. These are *.dat for DOS users and hwdatal.mdb for HWW users.

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