

HandyWork Newsletter

Winter 2003

HIP_{AA} HIP_{AA} HIP_{AA} HOORAY?

HWW & HIPAA

"We are from the government and we are here to help you." So runs the most recent intrusion into our personal and business lives. Ostensibly designed to "solve" the health care crisis it created through earlier intrusions into medical care, the HIPAA act adds new burdens to a wide range of practitioners. But first the good news: You may be exempt from its provisions. Here is how.

As far as I can determine, HIPAA applies to you if, and only if you, or your billing service, submit patient insurance claims or data electronically. Thus, if you mail all of your claims, or simply give them to your patients as they leave the office, HIPAA does not currently apply to you. Be aware that even if you do not send claims electronically, but have a billing service outside of your office that does, you then become a "covered entity."

There is uncertainty about whether an in-office computer network puts you in the "covered entity" requirement. I don't believe so, but the law is written so vaguely in this regard that we will have to wait for further clarification.

If you do submit claims electronically, then, for sure, you are a covered entity and must comply with all of HIPAA's privacy and security rules. Here is how HandyWorks fits into this scheme.

The 2003 (and later) versions have several added security features that protect the privacy of your data.

But you must act to turn them on by adding users to the security system which is setup via a button in the Preferences screen.

Users will then be required to enter both their userID and Password to gain access to the HandyWorks data set. In addition, a new timeout function will log that user out of the system if they have been inactive for more than 20 minutes.

Because users are now "logged" in, we are also able to track their actions and keep a record of which patients they look at. The report of this activity can be found from the reports button in the Security setup screen.

Another major change that is entirely behind the scenes has been the addition of a new claims transmission format called ANSI 4010. It is produced for you automatically whenever you create an electronic transmission file from the e-bill wizards. We are still testing this format, but expect to have it completed by the April 2003 HIPAA compliance deadline.

DOS & HIPAA

While we would love to be able to modify the DOS system to comply with the HIPAA requirement, in a word, the answer is no. We can't do it. Not now, not tomorrow, not ever. This is because the programming requirements for both the security and claim transmission issues are far beyond the programming capability of the DOS-HW system.

If you are not part of the group of practitioners required to comply with

HIPAA, then you may continue using the DOS system without any legal repercussions. If, on the other hand, you are part of the group of practitioners that are legally required to comply with the HIPAA provisions, you will need to upgrade to our HWW version.

Nasty Dr. Steve

(Please note that there is only humor and a dash of witticism in this article. Please, do not be offended!)

We have been told that at times, Dr. Steve is nasty, rude, and condescending. It has also been reported to us that he has made some users feel stupid. To make matters worse, at times, he is reported as having a bad attitude and, even worse, he has been "sharp" with some end-users.

We know that many of these reports are true. Looking to solve this issue, we have tried to figure out where and when his poor support skills arise.

Dr. Steve readily admits he has a problem. "Sure I get hot under the collar" he says. When asked why, he told us where his problems lie.

According to Dr. Steve, the most common issue to raise his blood pressure are users who demand immediate attention to their problem regardless of the priority of other issues already in the support desk queue. He suggests calling a utility or insurance company so you can hear their recorded message on how your call is important to them and how it will be handled as soon as possible.

Dr. Steve tends to get upset with users who aren't current in their backup, or are clueless on how to restore. "Doesn't anyone ever read these newsletters?" he complains.

Part of his problem is that he was born and raised in New York City, a place notoriously short on time and long on attitude. But underneath his occasionally gruff demeanor lies a heart of gold and a person anxious to serve.

While he does not expect users to be gurus, he does expect them to know their right click from their drag and drop, not to mention the names of the keys on the keyboard (like the "**asterisk*"). Lastly, and on the positive side, he actually gets happy when end users follow his directions.

Support Fees

Current yearly support fees for 2003 are \$300 (single user) and \$350 for networked systems. Prompt payment of this support fee will enable us to continue giving help and support on an ongoing basis to all of our users.

DOS Fixes

Other than fixing a date error in HCFA claims, the DOS system remains essentially unchanged. A few dozen stalwart users remain on this robust, but outdated program.

HWW Enhancements

Once we get HIPAA out of the way, we are planning to expand use of the e-mail data field. We are also looking into outputting your appointment schedule and patient data base to a palm pilot. Please let me know if this interests you. The cost for this specific enhancement may be in the \$30-\$50 range

Backup Horror

Dr. R.F. of New Kensington, PA is a HW user for nearly 10 years and switched to our HWW version in 1999. So he has likely gotten nearly 20 newsletters, each and every one off them detailing a back-up horror story. Yet the saddened doctor trusted his consultant to make a back-up prior to some "minor" system maintenance. Well, the system maintenance ended up needing to re-load the Windows OS, which ended up removing critical components installed by the HW system. So he told the staff to re-install HWW. The staff did as instructed, but during installation, checked the box to install the initial start-up data set. This overwrote their existing HWDATA file.

And how recent was their backup, you might ask? Well, we have on our records a call from them regarding how and what to back-up on 10/8/2002, so they may have only a couple of months of data to put in. Hopefully, they can find a more recent backup, but at the time of this composition, we don't know for sure.

We feel bad when any one loses their data. And we don't know how to tell you how important it is to VERIFY that you are actually backing up what you are supposed to backup, other than by these tales of woe. So take heed, dear friend!

Backup daily and use different disks for different days of the week. Do a monthly backup and bring that disk off-site. Please don't be our next horror story.

Proper Backup

There are two types of computer users out there. Those that have lost data and those that will. Do you cancel your car insurance because you've had no accidents? Do you cancel your malpractice because

you've had no claims? Backing up is your ONLY insurance against a computer failure. If you don't have a backup and you lose your data, it will be no one's fault but your own.

We recommend using a Zip disk along with Microsoft Backup. It is quicker than tape, uses industry standards, supports a write verify and most important, we at the HW Support desk understand it!

Also a good bet is the R/W CD as they have gotten faster & cheaper. They are also more reliable than zip disks.

Backup several times a week, on different disks for different days. This way, if you have bad data that you only just discovered, you can go back to a previous date.

And most important, make sure you are backing up the correct files. DOS backs up C:\hw*.dat. HWW is c:\hww\hwdata.mdb.

Important: Do not believe that your beloved and trusted consultant has set your backup correctly! You must verify that it is correct by testing the restore yourself. Please do this NOW!

To be absolutely safe, restore your data to your home computer and verify that everything is cool! Make sure YOU don't end up in the Backup Horror column next time.

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Med-Unite: 800-792-5256
MD-Online: 888-499-5465

www.HandyWorks.com
140 East 28th Street (1F)
New York, NY 10016
(800) 255-0668
(212) 889-8878