# *STRATFORD*

**Stratford notes:**

We are receiving notices from the Medicare contractors in many states regarding converting our customers to the new formats for electronic claims. Most Stratford customers have already been converted. If you first used the Stratford software less than five years ago, you are probably using one of the new formats. We stopped using the proprietary formats for <u>new</u> customers around 1991. If you were using the old format prior to that, you may not have been converted. There was no reason to change if you were not having problems.

Those customers using the old formats will begin having problems as early as October 1, 1995. In previous newsletters we have notified all of our customers regarding the change.

As we have noted in newsletters over the past year, we are hoping that a large number of users do not wait until the last minute. If you do, you will be in the "rush hour commute".

*The time to change to the new electronic formats is now! You must be using either the National Standard Format or the ANSI 837 soon. You will begin receiving*

Many of the other software vendors have not been informing their users of the change. At a recent trade show, I asked another vendor what he was doing about the format changes. His response was that he thought that HCFA would not enforce the change. We told him about all the notices we have been receiving. He said he receives them also, but he "just throws them away." Unfortunately, that seems to be the prevailing view among other vendors. This will cause a stampede at the last minute. Those other vendors and their customers will be scrambling to find a way to transmit so they can be paid. Any of our customers who wait until the last minute will be caught in the stampede. One solution for everyone is to continue using the old formats and transmit to a clearinghouse. The clearinghouse will reformat the claims for you. They will charge for that service, of course.

If you are a Stratford customer, how do you know if you are transmitting with one of the new formats? If you use the "batch processor" you can tell by the "form type". When you set up a program to run, you do it by the form type. The new programs use 511 to 519 and 561 to 569 for the insurance forms. The new electronic transmission programs use the numbers 911 to 919 and 961 to 969. If you do not use these numbers or you are not sure, please fax a request to us at (415) 692-1073. We will research it for you.•

**Hard|ware** (härd´wãr´) the parts of a computer that can be kicked.

## FROM THE EDI CORNER......

Florida Medicare was going to phase in the new EDI changes gradually. They have discontinued this plan. The reason is that there are HCFA mandated changes to the proprietary format that are due October 1, 1995. Since proprietary formats cannot be used after June 30, 1996, it makes more sense to simply go to the new format immediately.

As all of you know, Stratford has been saying this all along. Stratford has not put any customers on a proprietary format for more than four years. We began using the National standard more than four years ago. We began using the ANSI format (wherever possible) nearly two years ago. We believe that the National Standard Format will be eliminated in favor of the ANSI format. At this time, Stratford supports more than 40 different National _Standard_ Formats. It really is the National _Similar_ Format. The National Standard Format has become almost as non-standard as the old proprietary formats. For this reason Stratford is using the ANSI format

exclusively wherever possible. The format creates files that are smaller and transmit faster than the National Standard Format. The ANSI format can be used for physician/supplier (HCFA 1500), dental (ADA), institutional (UB92) and all other claims. It is used by most forward looking businesses. We have heard that Walmart will not buy from a vendor unless the vendor has EDI capabilities using the ANSI X.12 formats.

Many software vendors still prefer the National Standard because it is a "flat file" format that can be viewed with a text editor. It looks very much like all the old proprietary formats. You can print it on paper and lay a ruler on it and find the data. The ANSI format is much more elegant and is what it was designed to be. It is an efficient, completely open-ended method of transmitting data. It must be reformatted before it can be viewed efficiently.

HCFA has mandated that none of its contractors may make any changes to the format. Of course, as you can imagine, we have a different version for every carrier. At least the changes required are very small. The changes are required, however, or the claims will be rejected. We do not know how a software vendor who is just beginning to write the program will make it by the July 1, 1996 deadline. We first transmitted a test claim in the ANSI format in September 1993. See our October 1993 newsletter for our notice of this. We also stated then that we believed this would be the format for all future claims transmissions.

We have received notices from other carriers: Xact Medicare Professional Services for Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and District of Columbia; MHIN (Maryland Health Information Network.)•

## INTERNET DISPLAY SPEED

After reading the last newsletter, several of our clients tried "surfing" the web. One of them complained that the display was so slow that it was not useable. His first problem was that he was using a 14.4 BAUD modem. Changing to a 28.8 BAUD modem will help a lot and for many people it will be acceptable. If you are used to working on a single user 486 you will still find the display very slow. Help is on the way. A person named Simon Spero has demonstrated HTTP-NG. NG stands for New Generation. This will speed the display 5 times or more.•

## WINDOWS 95 AND HARDWARE UPGRADES

When IBM first introduced the PC in 1991 they sold about 800,000 units. That was considered a huge success. It stunned the world and probably even IBM. Microsoft is currently selling Windows 3.1x at the rate of about 3 million copies per month. PC makers will likely switch over completely to Win95 by the end of 1995. A Dataquest analyst estimates that Microsoft will ship an average of 800,000 copies of Windows 95 every three days until the end of 1995. That is a total of 33 million copies.

Many of the larger corporations are installing NT for their desktop computers and skipping Windows 3.1x and Win95. NT is likely to generate $500 million in sales in the year ending June 1996. Union Carbide is installing 100 NT servers now to support nearly 10,000 workstations. Stratford is also selling more NT servers. We have seen small offices with fewer than 10 workstations choose NT because it is so reliable. It can add more than $2,000 to the price of a small network for a dedicated server. If it prevents you from losing your data even one time it will pay for itself. To date, we do not know of one

customer that has had corrupted data on an NT Server! Try to match that with any other network operating system. Novell is good also, but it is much more expensive to install and maintain.

We do not yet know how many of our customers will upgrade. We would appreciate your giving us notice by fax at (415) 692-1073. If you purchase a new computer, you may need a different size floppy disk for your updates. If you do not let us know, you may need several support calls and several days to get the correct diskette. There are two Stratford supported diskette sizes at this time: 3 1/2 inch and 5 1/4 inch. The 3 1/2 inch diskette measures 3 1/2 X 3 5/8 inches. The 5 1/4 inch diskette measures 5 1/4 X 5 1/4 inches square.

If you install Win95 or NT, you will be eligible for the upgrade to our new Windows compliant user interface if you want it. Just fax the information to us at (415) 692-1073.•

## STRATFORD SOFTWARE SUPPORT UPDATE

We are now over six months into our expanded software support project. Everything has been relatively stable for the past three months. We are now getting an extensive amount of data regarding individual client calling patterns. This will enable us to eventually charge each client an amount that covers the amount of support actually being used. As of August 15, 1995 our numbers indicate the following averages for a 90 day period:

- number of calls per client: 8.03
- number of minutes per call: 4.58

Those clients using significantly more support than that will receive a notice of a change in their rate for the next billing period. We plan to track the usage over a 90 day "window" so that a major problem in one month will not change the monthly rate.

The other change that is planned is the charge for EDI software support. At this time we charge a monthly fee for the bookkeeping and diskettes that are required for those clients that transmit claims. For one carrier the charge is $9.50 per month. For two or more carriers the charge is $16.00. This charge does not even begin to pay for the actual EDI customer support costs. We plan to change this to one, fixed charge for any number of carriers. The charge will probably be $12.62 per month. We are testing a new program that should allow us to support any number of carriers as easily as one. Most of our customers will have a decrease in their monthly charge since most of our users transmit to Medicare, Medicaid and at least one private insurance clearinghouse.•
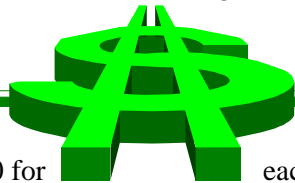
Stratford will pay you $100 for each person* you refer who purchases Stratford Software at full price ($895). Simply fax or write to give us your referral. **We must receive the referral notice in advance of the sale**. **We cannot pay for a referral if you notify us after the sale.** *Subject to
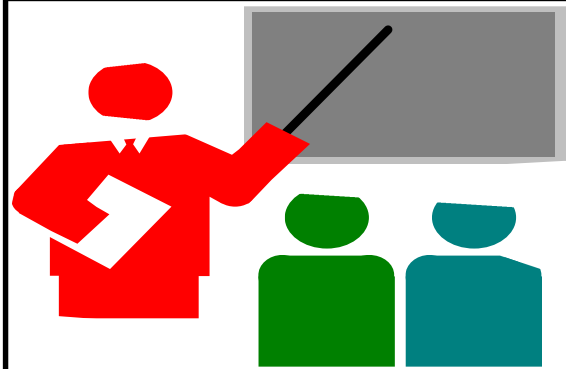
## ADVANCED TIP OF THE MONTH

Have you ever needed to put a comment on an insurance form? Some procedure codes require comments on the new HCFA 1500 form. You are also required to transmit comments for some procedures. To do this, enter a printing memo immediately after the charge. This memo must be flagged to print on insurance forms. Since the default for print memos is to print only on statements, you must revise the memo and flag it to print on insurance forms and possibly to stop it from printing on statements. An easy way to do this is to set up an autotransaction with the desired printing flags already set. Call the special print memo: `IMEMO` or `IM` or