stratford notes

S tratford is ready for the year 2000. All Stratford customer have year 2000 "Y2K" compliant software. We are not aware of any problems that will affect any of our customers that has anything to do with our software.

If any customer has any questions or concerns, we would like to know any details as soon as possible. You can fax to (650) 692 7970 or email to Y2K@stratfordsoftware.com.

Stratford has more than **4,000** licensed users

You can find Stratford's Internet server at this address:
`http://www.stratfordsoftware.com/`

We have tested our software with so many payers that our files are overflowing. We are well aware that there are still many payers (no Medicare contractors as far as we know) who have not asked for tests. We only hope that they are ready.

There are at least two potential sources of problems for Stratford customers:

1. Customers with non-Y2K compliant hardware. This has been discussed in previous newsletters and we have given sources for test software that can be run to test for Y2K readiness on the hardware. We are aware that these tests are not foolproof. Although you may have run the test and you think everything is OK, you may still have problems. As far as we know, this will only affect people with computers more than three years old. If you get 5.25 inch diskettes from Stratford with your updates, this may indicate that your hardware is old. Newer computers have the smaller, 3.5 inch, diskettes. This problem, if it exists, is not related in any way to the Stratford program and so we will not be able to offer any support. Probably the only advice we can give is that you need to upgrade your computer. Currently, upgrading a computer usually means getting a new one.

2. The second potential problem is a payer that is not fully prepared to accept claims in the year 2000. We have tested (or are testing) our software with all the payers that have notified us of a testing procedure. If we make changes to our software to comply with new requirements, you may need an update. Be sure that you check your monthly statement from Stratford. It lists the various payers and clearinghouses that you transmit claims to. If you transmit to a payer or clearinghouse that is not listed, please let us know as soon as possible so we can correct our records. This is the only way we will know that you need an update. •

FROM THE EDI CORNER ......

New Internet claims capability...
Many Stratford customers send paper claims to an HMO in California named MPMG. The main office for this HMO is located across the street from Stratford's main office near the San Francisco International Airport.

Soon, MPMG will begin accepting claims electronically. They are the first payer that we know of that requires all electronic claims to be sent by Internet email. The expertise for doing this is beyond many of our customers. The customer must have an Internet account and the necessary hardware in the office.

Stratford has a bulletin board on-line that has the capability of 'looking' exactly like many of the payers that we support. We use it for testing our software instead of sending a lot of worthless files to the payer.

We are in the process of modifying our test bulletin board so that our customers can transmit claims for MPMG exactly the same way that claims are transmitted directly to all Medicare payers now. We will be using our proprietary bulletin board software that we have installed for many payers.

The claims will be sent using a protocol like that now used by EDS. As you may know, EDS does the actual claims processing for many third party payers and Medicare contractors.

When the claims arrive here at Stratford, they will immediately be repackaged and forwarded as email to MPMG. We believe the delay will be less than 30 seconds for most files. There will be no human intervention and no possibility of confidentiality problems. This service is available to all Stratford customers who subscribe to software support on a continuous basis and there will be no charge associated with it.

We will make a similar service available to all payers that we now support.   •

EMAIL SUPPORT

We had a good response to last month's article about our new support services. Many people are beginning to use email for support. To make the support even better and faster, please put your account number in the 'subject' area of the email. This allows us to identify you and access your account quickly. This is especially important if you have an on-going support issue. Also it helps if you put a short description of the problem in the subject. Here is an example of a very helpful subject:
"306890, need to setup transmission to Blue Cross."

EDI "per-claim" charges
Stratford does not have any "per-claim" or other charges related to transmitting claims to Medicare or any other carrier. We only charge (optional) for providing software support.

INTERNET SOFTWARE UPDATES

We are now in the final phases of expanding and modernizing our Internet web site. These changes will allow our customers to easily download updates. In addition, you will be able to order supplies on-line. We plan to offer many other services this way also.

If you are not "Internet savvy" this will seem like a lot of trouble and you may resist. There are many advantages that will win you over, however.

For example, the software installs itself. You don't need to wait for floppy diskettes to arrive in the mail. No more problems with diskettes that are damaged in shipping. No more shipping costs. No more hardware hassles.

These services will be available every day of the year, 24 hours per day.

This will be made available to all customers who subscribe to continuous software support and pay automatically by having a credit card on file with us.

The most important advantage this method of delivering services offers is the convenience. We believe that the convenience makes it superior to the present method, even if it does not result in lower costs. If the majority of our customers elect to receive updates electronically, we believe the cost savings will be significant.

In the beginning, probably in December, you will need to get a password from

Stratford. Next you can go to our web site and click on a 'link'. This will automatically download the update. For most customers with modern computers, there will be no installation procedure. The update will happen automatically. For Stratford, this will be very good, because we can have more frequent updates, probably 12 per year, or more. This means there will be few changes in each update and so the update will be more reliable with less testing. We will be able to have even faster turnaround when a payer requires something new in the claim format. We believe we can offer a new update within hours once the procedures are worked out.

If you are not now using the Internet for anything, we suggest you begin by signing up for free email. You can get a free account from "hotmail" or any of the many other sites. You can send your next support question to Stratford at this address: support@stratfordsoftware.com. This is at least as fast as sending a fax and is free. The email will go directly to the support person's desk in seconds. We had a description of this process in last month's newsletter.
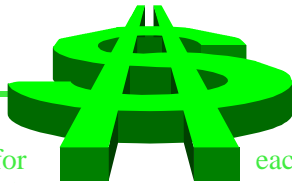
SOFTWARE SUPPORT NOTES

1 **Faxed requests for support get <u>Priority</u> <u>Service</u>.**

2 **If you send a fax with a description of the problem, your call is given priority over other faxes**.

3 **Do not call more than one time. The second call places your first call at the bottom of our callback list.**

We can receive many calls in the first few hours each day. It usually is not possible for us to have a technical support person waiting to take your call. If you just call and leave the message "please call", your call is placed at the bottom of the callback list. We must do everything we can to avoid "phone-tag". Hand-written faxes can be almost impossible to read, so please type them whenever possible. Include the best time to call you.
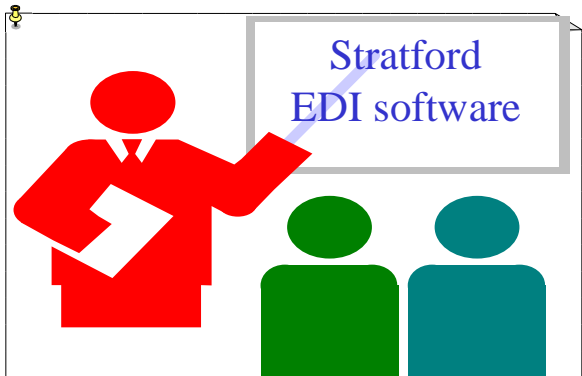
At this time we can deliver support by email. If you check your email each day, you may find this to be easier than faxing us. This is not very good support if you need a quick answer. We do not get very many support email messages so we only check the mail two or three times each day. As the volume increases, we will put more resources into email.

We are interested in hearing from people who would like to receive support by email. •

Stratford
EDI software

INTERNET RESOURCES

We are less than 70 days away from January 1, 2000, so here are some web sites with relevant information:

Http://www.y2k.com (this will transfer you to cnet.com)

Http://www.year2000.com

http://unix.cc.wmich.edu/rea/Y2K/

http://www.microsoft.com/y2k/

We would appreciate hearing from you regarding any specific concerns you may have regarding Stratford, Y2K, etc. Please email to

y2k@stratfordsoftware.com

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.**
*<u>Subject to restrictions</u>