



SIMSOL's Turbulent Times

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SIMSOL® Software, Inc. / SIMSOL® Insurance Services, Inc.

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Saving Reconstruction Time and Money

By John A. Postava, President of SIMSOL

No matter where claims occur, filing a claim quickly, accurately and efficiently is the main goal of every professional property adjuster. Increasing productivity will also increase the independent adjuster's income. Be careful to avoid common mistakes and employ some basic techniques to save time.

Develop a Routine

Having a routine means doing the same activities in the same order every time. Developing a routine will keep adjusters organized and prevent them from forgetting vital steps in the claim process. Decide the order with which to examine the property and stick with it each time. Record and scope damages in the same order for each damaged area or room. Remember, deviating from a set routine can lead one to overlook an important detail.

Be methodical: measure rooms to the exact inch. Include all closets and offsets even if they don't appear damaged. Draw an accurate diagram of each room or area and take lots of photos. It also helps to develop a checklist or tick sheet of repair items and mark them off throughout property examination.

Do not let anyone or anything distract from the routine. Scope the loss alone whenever possible. Most property owners will want to walk and talk with the adjuster

as he or she conducts the examination. This practice is due to their anxiety over their loss or curiosity concerning the adjusting process, so it's a good idea to provide good customer service up-front and spend a little time with the policyholder before you begin your inspection to develop a rapport.

Explain the routine to the policyholder and assure them that this process will enable the most efficient examination of the property. Ask the policyholder if there is anything that he or she would like to emphasize prior to the walk through of the property and check in with them prior to leaving the premises.

After completing the damage assessment, briefly review the scope of the examination with the policyholder. During this conversation, briefly explain the procedure, what the next steps are after the examination, and be realistic about all future timetables. This is a good time to ask the policyholder if he or she has any questions. Remember to provide the policyholder with all relevant contact information.

Know Your Stuff

Be familiar with the policy and coverage of the property that is the subject of the claim. It is important to know what is covered and what is not.

See Saving Reconstruction - page 2

Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne brought more claims adjusters to Florida than swampland speculators in the 1920's.

At last count the "Fearsome Foursome" generated more than two million property claims.

Just the sheer number of claims requires adjusters to increase productivity to meet the demands of homeowners.

Need a Demo?
Call Perry Goldman at
800.447.4676, x328

The World's Easiest Quiz

Passing requires 4 correct answers.

1. How long did the 100 years war last?
2. Which country makes Panama hats?
3. From which animal do we get catgut?
4. In which month do Russian celebrate the October Revolution?
5. What is a camel's hair brush made of?
6. The Canary Islands in the Pacific are named after what animal?
7. What was King George VI's first name?
8. What color is a purple finch?
9. Where are Chinese Gooseberries from?
10. What is the color of the black box in a commercial airplane?

1. 116 years 2. Ecuador 3. Sheep horses
4. November 5. Squirrel fur 6. Dogs 7. Albert
8. Crimson 9. New Zealand 10. Orange of course!

FYI...

American Catastrophe Claims

American Catastrophe Claims is located in South Florida and run by Mr. Wolf Kinderman. He can be reached at (954) 229-0727.

The ASU Group (www.asugroup.com)

The ASU Group is an employee-owned company providing services to the insurance and self-insurance industries. For over 45 years, The ASU Group has been based in the Lansing, Michigan area.

Claim Adjustment Specialists, Inc. (www.casclaims.com)

"We're proud of our work and we guarantee it."

Colonial Claims (www.colonialclaims.com)

A Florida-based company with national, multi-site capability. From single assignments to catastrophes, they offer claim solutions for insurers throughout the United States. 2200 Bayshore Blvd., Dunedin, FL. 34698 tel. 727-738-1366 or 800-356-6326 County Line Claim Service, Inc.

Insurance Claims Adjusters (ICA, Inc.) (www.icaadjusters.com)

A nationwide full-service insurance adjusting firm specializing in Property & Casualty and Catastrophe claims. Toll free number: (877) 807-9669 or toll free fax at (877) 807-9670. Ready to respond 24 hrs/day, 7 days/week.

Eastland Claims Service (www.eastland-claims.com)

Eastland Claim Service, Inc... handles property and casualty claims for insurance companies, self insurers and third party administrators.

SIMSOL Insurance Services, INC. (SIS) (www.catadjuster.com)

SIS is a Catastrophe Claims Adjustment company offering a full line of claims adjustment services to the insurance industry.

Sweet Claim Services (www.scsclaims.com)

SCS is a full-line catastrophe adjusting company handling claims for various insurance carriers nationwide.

www.catadjuster.org - This is a website created by Roy Cupps, a catastrophe property adjuster. It's a great meeting place for cat adjusters looking for work or just want to stop by for a "chat".

See FYI - Page 3



Introducing...

Surina Luangrath, SIMSOL Tech Support

I started working at SIMSOL as a part-timer in Technical Support in 2002.

After graduating from UCF with a Bachelor's degree in MIS, I started working at SIMSOL Full-Time.

Although I love my job, I have other interests such as snowboarding, dancing, and being a computer nerd (particularly on Mac's).

Surina Luangrath
Technical Support

Saving Reconstruction - continued from page 1

It can help adjusters to avoid wasting time on unnecessary areas or details.

In addition, when using a claims estimating, GPS and/or reporting software, know how to use it prior to scoping. Take the time to learn the software in the off-season, not while on the premises or on the way to the event. This enables a quicker inspection. Some companies require the use of specific software, so know which program will be mandatory for the company you are working for. Practice using the software's basic features and familiarize yourself with the program's time-saving, power-user features if possible. All the leading software providers offer CD or internet-based learning tools. Take advantage of their training classes when your time permits.

Don't Bite off More Than You Can Chew

It's hard for most independent adjusters to "Just say no!" but with so many claims resulting from this hurricane season, it's easy to become overworked and over committed. Remember to pace accordingly and don't take on more claims than is realistic.

When too many appointments are scheduled on a given day, there is a tendency to hurry through each inspection. This is a formula for disaster and when most mistakes occur. Space out the appointments like the

"cable guy." ("I'll be at your house between 9AM and noon."). And make every effort to complete claim and estimate paperwork the same day of the inspection while the memory is still fresh.

Avoid Common Mistakes

Deduct wall openings

It's important for adjusters to deduct wall openings such as windows and doors in their estimates. The additional wall square footage amounts resulting from the failure of entering wall opening information increases the cost for most wall repair line items such as drywall, paint and wallpaper.

This is especially true when entering closet measurements. Most closets contain some type of door opening, which is either single or double width. If closet door openings are not deducted from the estimate, large errors can result when calculating items such as drywall. For example, entering the closet door opening subtracts not only the drywall from the main area of the room but also from the interior of the closet. This goes the same for any finish later applied to the drywall such as paint, wallpaper or paneling.

In the past, estimators have hesitated in subtracting door and window openings when calculating wall areas in building estimates. One reason is that the calculations are difficult and there is a school of thought that these areas

See *Saving Reconstruction* -
page 3



should be left in the total wall square footage calculation as an allowance for waste.

Because many of today's computer programs make it easy for estimators to calculate and remove these openings from the total wall square foot calculation, and the fact that many wall finish item unit costs allow for waste and prep time, properly trained adjusters should enter all wall opening information. Although contractors may argue that this wall area should be left in the estimate to cover the cost of labor for having to work around the openings, most of today's estimating software cost databases take into account the repair nature of the work being performed.

Deducting wall openings will not only make estimates more accurate but also give an adjuster more room to adjust the estimate if negotiations with a restoration contractor become necessary.

Measuring Rooms and Individual Items Properly

Old habits die hard. Back before adjusting

software, many estimators rounded room areas to the nearest foot or half-foot in order to simplify calculations. Computers make this no longer necessary. However, our findings indicate that many adjusters still measure areas this way.

Estimators also have a tendency to "round up" causing, in many situations, higher estimate totals than necessary.



When it comes to entering a room, offset and closet dimensions, instead of rounding up or down estimators should enter accurate measurements to the inch. Many of a room's repair quantities are directly affected by room measurements. Precise measurements are a must.

All computer estimating systems make to-the-inch calculations easy. Enter these values properly. If the resulting calculation requires some adjustment due to the nature of the material being replaced (i.e. 12' rolls of carpet or 60' double rolls of wall covering), an adjustment can be made after speaking with the installing general or sub contractor.

Repairing only affected wall areas

At times, it may not be necessary to replace an area's entire floor, wall or ceiling. Many of the leading estimating programs default to replacing an area's entire floor, wall or ceiling area as items are selected for an estimate. However, the damaged area may be repaired without replacing the entire wall, floor or ceiling. In such an event, estimators should make the proper allowances to get a more accurate assessment of cost of repairing the damaged area.

Do not overuse or abuse Minimum Charges

This is a big one. In many estimates there is overuse of minimum charges. In many instances, estimators used the same trade minimum charge in multiple rooms. Minimum charges should only be applied at a one-per-trade, per estimate rate.

The overuse of minimum charges will almost always result in the over estimating of the loss. With the use of claims estimating

See Saving Reconstruction - page 4

FYIs - from page 2

Lots of good information on the catastrophe adjusting business. If you visit this site often and find it helpful, please consider sending Roy \$60.00 per year to keep it up and running (he works very hard on it!).

www.fema.com

The Federal Emergency Management Agency. Adjusters can learn about FEMA and all of its many programs including the National Flood Insurance Program.

www.nacatadj.org

National Association of Catastrophe Adjusters, Inc. The association is dedicated to improving professional standards, insuring working relations with one another and promoting the general welfare of the individual members.

www.rsminsurance.com

R.S. Means is the number provider of cost data for the insurance and construction industries. They also market SIMSOL Software integrated with their data. Check out this site to buy some books or see what their up to.

www.caiaa.org

The official website of the California Independent Adjuster's Association (CAIAA), an association of independent insurance adjusters dedicated to professionalism and education.

SIMSOL Tech Tip

As you become more proficient with SIMSOL for Adjusters/Contractors, you will learn that there are a number of tools you can use to help minimize your time while writing claims or creating jobs.

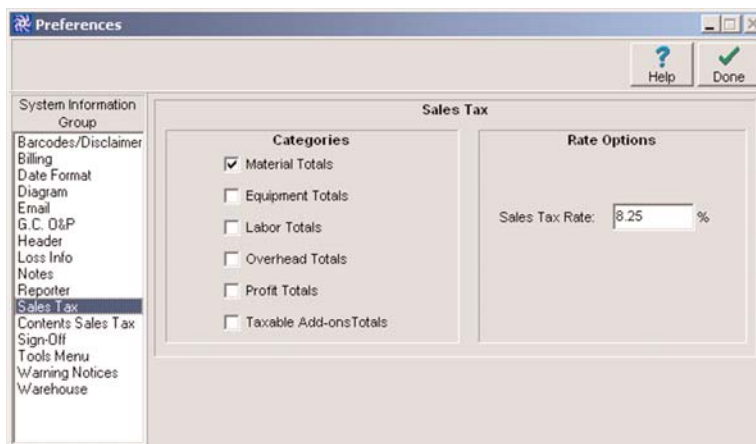
One of these tools happens to be the preferences screen found under the view menu in the main toolbar of the SIMSOL for Adjusters/Contractors. The Preferences screen was designed specifically to let you pre-fill various types of information for a claim before it has even been created!

"If time is money, the Preferences screen is your piggy bank"

Stop wasting valuable time every claim by having to type your name, your company's name and address, sales tax rates, contractor O&P percentages, or disclaimers.

This information can all be setup to automatically be placed in every claim you create by simply spending a few minutes with the Preferences screen.

Every adjuster wants to be able to write claims as efficiently as possible and the Preferences screen is vital to achieving it.



The SIMSOL for Adjusters™ Preferences Screen



Here's Your Opportunity To Get Your "Pennies From Heaven" !

SIMSOL Software's sister company, **SIMSOL Insurance Services, Inc. (SIS)**, is always looking for qualified flood adjusters.

SIS conducts monthly adjuster training classes at our facility in Orlando, Florida.

The 2-day classes review flood policy coverages, limitations and exclusions in addition to how to handle flood claims in the field. Software instruction teaches students how to best utilize SIMSOL when adjusting claims for the National Flood Program and Write-Your-Own (WYO) insurance carriers. Cost is minimal to the adjusters. Selected students will be given the opportunity to work for SIS and obtain free software from SIMSOL.

We suggest anyone interested to first attend an NFIP certification class. Those adjusters without NFIP certification will not be able to take flood assignments from SIS until they are certified.

If you are interested in attending any of the SIS training classes, contact J.R. Moritz at 800-447-4676 x521 or email him at jrm@catadjuster.com.

MAKE A NOTE TO YOURSELF: There are no more NFIP certification classes planned for 2005. Classes begin again in January of 2006. Check the National Flood Insurance Program website in November for class schedules around the country (<http://www.fema.gov/nfip>) and get certified.



Volume 5, Number 2

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From Saving Reconstruction - page 3

software, adjusters can easily enter exact area quantities throughout a multi-room estimate. Estimators can then check the estimate's trade and sub-trade breakdowns to see if minimums are met. Some estimating systems include a minimum charge auditing feature which will review an estimate to ensure all trade minimums are satisfied.

Avoid Misapplication Finishes

Items such as pre-finished wood flooring, paneling and cabinetry are installed with a finish already applied to the material. (Hence the term "pre-finished".) It's important to distinguish these so adjusters do not add cost of additional coat of paint or finish being applied to already pre-finished materials.

In Conclusion

Remember the goal of any property adjuster is to file claims accurately, cost-effectively and as quickly as possible. By utilizing the time-saving tips and avoiding common mistakes adjusters can save time and money not only for themselves, but for the carrier and still provide good customer service.



Tech Notes

A gentleman called our support department to find out how to transfer his claims from his old laptop to his new laptop.

The conversation went something like this:

Support Rep: Ok sir, to transfer your claims, we will simply archive your claims and save them to a CD. Then we will unarchive the claims from the CD to your SIMSOL program on the new laptop.

Customer: Ok, that doesn't sound too hard...

Support Rep: Ok good, so let's get started...open SIMSOL on your old laptop....

Customer: Uh oh... I can't

Support Rep: Why not?

Customer: My laptop is at my sister's house...

Support Rep: ?

Owens Corning Price Increase

From a letter written by Brian Chambers, VP and General Manager, Residential Roofing Exterior Systems Business

"Our industry continues to be impacted by rising manufacturing and logistic costs. We anticipate this higher cost structure to remain in place throughout 2005 and beyond. Based on this, we are writing to inform you of a price increase of approximately 5% on residential roofing shingles, rolls, and accessories beginning with shipments on September 1, 2005.

This price increase is effective the date the product is shipped, not the date of order entry. We will make every attempt to accommodate order requests to be shipped prior to the September 1st price increase date. ... please contact your Owens Corning Area Sales Manager who will communicate specific increase amounts by product category."

SIMSOL has updated all shingle-related items in our construction cost databases to take into account this price increase. Updated prices may be found in the July 2005 database update located on the SIMSOL website.

