Contents

SWAMP Manual or User's Guide

Introduction

SWAMP 4.0 utilizes many ways to convey information to a user about fields on a form. Most fields have a label that is sufficient for things like Name, address, phone, etc.

There is also the status bar text.   Put your cursor in a field and text about that field shows up on the Status bar at the bottom of the program. For example, if you put the cursor in the Proprietor field, the status bar displays the message "Enter the full name of the owner or operator of the business." For most fields, this short phrase or sentence is more than enough to tell you what the purpose is. These are not included in a pop-up help dialog box.

However, pop-ups (the "?" buttons) are appropriate for describing more complicated issues, such as what 'Guarantee Time' and 'Lead Days' are. What does it mean to enter a 'Facility Fee' and what happens when I check 'Use Date for Backup File Title.' On other forms you will see specific explanations of the function to be performed there.

Other actions are more complex, or lengthy, or are more process driven and end up in the SWAMP Manual or User's Guide. This manual is intended as a "How do I . . " document which will help you with the various tasks of operating a self-storage facility, using the many features of SWAMP. We recommend that you use this manual while viewing SWAMP on the screen, since we have not used views of the forms in this manual. Let us know if there are features that you feel have not been adequately explained.

Installation of SWAMP 4.0

You will need approximately 150 MB of space on your hard drive and a Windows operating system of 95 or later. SWAMP 4.0 is Vista compatible. Place the CD in your computer CD drive. The SWAMP Installation form will appear on your screen. Click the button, 'Install SWAMP.' Follow directions on the installation wizard and SWAMP will be installed on your C:\ drive in a folder called SWAMP.

If you are a current user of SWAMP, you still need to install the full 4.0 version. Then you also need to click the second button labeled 'Conversion Utility.' When both programs are installed, click on 'Exit.'

There should now be two icons on your desktop, one for SWAMP 4.0 and one labeled 'Convert SWAMPDAT'

Click on 'Convert SWAMPDAT.' Find the Swampdat.mdb file that you are currently using, select it and click on 'Open.' SWAMP will convert this to a new file called SwampData.qcc. Save it to your SWAMP folder. This is the file you will use in SWAMP 4.0. It will contain all the information that was in SWAMPDAT.mdb.

Open SWAMP 4.0 and click on 'Maintenance/Find Database' and select 'SwampData.qcc' and you are ready to go.

Getting started for the new user of SWAMP

After installing SWAMP, open it to the 'SWAMP Home Menu' and click on 'Customize.' A form will open with a series of tabs across the top. The form opens on the tab 'Facility.' Enter the information called for in the appropriate fields. Use the information available with the '?' feature if you are unclear as to the entry.

Close this form [or click the tab at the top of the form] to return to 'SWAMP Home Menu.' Click the button labeled 'Buildings.' Here you record the individual buildings which contain your storage units. Essential is a building number, letter or name and an opening date. The other information is optional. Click the yellow plus sign icon to get a new form for the next building. Enter them all.

Close the 'Buildings' form and click on 'Units.' On this form enter each of the units in your facility, assigning each to the building which houses them. Click the yellow plus icon for a new blank form for each new unit. If you have several units with the same size and rental rate, you may use the 'Replicate' button [the one with two interlocking rectangles], which will enter duplicate information and put 'NEW UNIT' as the unit number. Simply enter the new unit's proper number in that field. After entering all units, return to 'SWAMP Home Menu.' You are now ready to enter tenants into SWAMP.

Entering a new tenant

As a time saving aid in entering tenants, click on 'Customize' and then click the tab 'Values.' In the section titled 'Default Values' enter the default values which would be used by most of your tenants. These can be changed at the time of entering a tenant if they do not apply.

From the 'SWAMP Home Menu' click the button "New Tenant.' Again you will see a form with several tabs at the top. On the 'Info' form, record the information about the tenant. Only name and address are essential, but there are several other fields for identification and contact purposes. Fill in all that you wish to record.

Click the tab 'Rentals.' The form will be blank except for a button at the top right which reads, 'Move in Wizard.' Click it. Select an available unit and a billing period and click 'Next.' On the next form which opens, you must select the method of payment [cash, check, money order, credit card]. You may add any recurring charge at this point, such as insurance. Click 'Next.' This will show you what this tenant is being charged, the rental and any automatic charge that you have entered on the 'Facility Info' form, such as a 'Deposit.' At this screen you may add additional charges, such as the sale of boxes or locks.

Click 'Next.' This final form of the 'Move in Wizard' allows you to assign a gate code and special access codes. It also has a field for you to enter a 'Marketing' comment from the types of marketing you have entered on the 'Marketing' form, which is found by a tab at the top of the 'Customize' form. This allows you to record how this tenant decided to rent from you, such as yellow page ad, flyer, referral, etc. Click 'Finish' and the information about the rented unit will appear in the 'Rentals' form, plus several more buttons which provide access to other features and wizards found in SWAMP.

Click the 'Contacts' tab. Many states require that you offer the tenant the right to name an additional contact person who must be notified in case you need to sell the contents of this unit, or for emergency reasons. Enter that information on this form, or click the box before 'Tenant does not wish to list contact.'

SWAMP now offers a feature to store digital images or files pertaining to this rental. Click the tab, 'Attachments' to access this feature. The image or file you wish to store needs to be available on a drive in your computer, or from an attachment to your camera. Double click on one of the display windows and a form will open headed 'Attachments.' Click 'Add' to find the image you want and enter it. This may be a document, a driver's license, a photo of the tenant, a photo of the contents of the unit before a sale, etc.

Entering existing tenants into SWAMP

Follow the same procedures as entering a new tenant except for the 'Move In Date' on the first form of the 'Move In Wizard.' The default date in that field is today's date. Change this to the 'Due' date of the tenant's last payment of 'rental' charges.

On the third form of the 'Move In Wizard' enter any refundable deposit made by this tenant, if SWAMP has not already entered it.

Generating rental charges and late fees

On 'SWAMP Home Menu' click the 'Activities' button. On this form, click the 'Generate Rent/Fees' button. The default selection will be for 'All Tenants Due' but you may generate rents and fees for a single tenant if you wish. Check the date in the field 'Generate rents having due dates up to:' The default date is set by how many 'Lead Days' you selected on the 'Customize/Facility' form. [Today's date plus the 'Lead Days.'] Leave that as is or change it to one you prefer. Click on 'Generate Rents Now.' When this is completed a 'Pop-up' form will tell you how many rents were generated. Click on OK.

If you have not already done so, select a late fee type by clicking on 'Customize' under the field for 'Late Fee Type.' The customize form offers five types of late fees. Each is explained when you click the '?' by the type. When you have selected the type you wish, click the button

'Generate Late Fees Now.' Late fees will be generated for the current month only.   Again, a 'Pop-up' form will inform you as to how many fees were generated. Click on OK.

You may generate rents at any time, however we recommend that if you are using the anniversary date for rentals to be due, that you generate rents and fees once per week. If you are using the 'same day of the month' for your due date, we recommend that you generate rents once per month – about the end of the third week. In that case, generate late fees right after the grace period has passed each month.

Using the feature 'Reminders' you can schedule generation of rents and fees to be done automatically on the days you select.

Recording payments and making deposits

For recording regular 'mailed in' payments, it is easiest to open 'Select Billings' from the 'Activities' form. Here you will see a list of all the 'Unpaid' billings of rent and fees, listed alphabetically by tenant name.   Scroll down the list to the appropriate tenant or enter that tenant's name in the field at the top of the form and then click the box under 'P' which stands for paid.

For the tenant who presents payments in person, it is probably better to open that tenant's form. Note the 'Quick Find' feature at the top right of the 'SWAMP Home Menu. Click on the tab 'Payments' and click the box under 'P' to record that payment. That also automatically puts a check mark in the box at the right under 'R' for receipt, which can then be printed to give to the tenant. If the tenant is paying for several items at one time – multiple rents, late fees, etc. -- you may wish to use the 'Take a Payment' wizard accessed from a button at the top of this form. Follow the directions printed on that form.

SWAMP also provides credit card payments for those who elect to do so. You must first obtain a merchant account with a credit card processing firm. After setting up the Credit Card Information on 'Maintenance/Configure Credit Card' you may take an individual credit card payment on the tenant form 'Payments' by clicking the 'Charge It' button at the bottom of the form and entering the credit card information in the pop up form labeled 'Charge Credit Card.'

Deposits of income can be made at any time. Click on 'Activities.' Under the general title of 'Deposits' click on the button reading 'Deposit Payments.' You will get a pop up form which asks for the final date you wish to include. Default is today. Click OK. SWAMP will then print a list of all payments made since the previous deposit. Check this against the actual payments. If they match, then click 'Yes' to the question 'Did the deposit report print correctly' and SWAMP will mark all these payments as 'D' for deposited. If they do not match, click 'No', correct the

entries and repeat.

Note that there are several buttons below 'Deposit Payments' which will list the deposit in various forms. If you wish to print any of these, you must do so before you deposit the payments.

A report is also available to list all deposits that you make.

Discussion of Tenant centered registry in SWAMP

Despite the fact that much of this will be redundant, it is important that the user of SWAMP understand how SWAMP is set up and how the various records and information about the tenant and their rentals are entered and used. At the center of SWAMP record keeping is the Tenant – not the unit, not the facility. Therefore the first tab on the Tenant form is information about the tenant. It is your choice as to how much information you wish to record, but name and address are all that are required. The second tab details what this tenant is doing in your facility – what unit or units has the tenant rented and what is the status of that rental. Also from this tab there are a number of actions that the user can take in relation to this unit – assign codes, add recurring charges, transfer to another unit, move out of this unit, delete this rental, print a lease or print a form letter. You may also rent another unit to this tenant by using the 'Move In Wizard.'

The next tab is labeled 'Payments.' It is on this record that **all** financial dealings with this tenant are recorded. The first ones are entered by the 'Move In Wizard' and include the first rental payment, any deposit or administrative fee and any purchase, such as a lock or boxes. These are all marked 'P' for paid and 'M' for mailed. A check mark will be placed by SWAMP in the 'D' for deposited box when these payments are deposited. After the initial payment, it is up to the user to place on this record a charge for the next month's rent. This is done by the 'Generating' of rental charges [see above.] What this action does is to place in the first empty line on the payments form, a number of figures and dates. The three boxes under P D and M will be blank. The unit field will have the unit number and the category will read 'Rental.' SWAMP will not recognize variations of this – such as 'rents' – so don't add such a category. The dollar figure in charges will be the monthly rate for this unit and the figure in 'Payments' will be $0.00. The date that this charge was created will be listed under 'Billed.' Rental payments cover a certain period of time. The next two columns show that period of time for this charge by dates under 'Due' and 'To date.' Note that for a regular monthly billing, these dates will be one month apart – 01 Nov 2008 to 01 Dec 2008 [NOT 30 Nov 2008.] The next three columns are blank, waiting to record when and how the payment is made. SWAMP will also allow you to enter this information yourself. Open the 'Payments' tab, go to the first blank line and select the unit number. Under 'Category' select 'Rental'. SWAMP will then look at the last 'To Date' and create a charge for the next rental period. It is imperitive that there be a 'To Date' on the rental charge for the next charge to be correctly billed. While difficult to do, it is possible to leave that date off. If so, SWAMP, looking at the last 'To Date', will bill this month again.

Recording payments that are the same as the amount billed is a snap. Just click the 'P' box and SWAMP records the amount and date paid. You may then add the type of payment and any note you wish – such as check number.   Receiving a payment which is more or less than the amount charged causes undue anguish with some of our users. SWAMP handles these with ease. On the 'Customize/Facility' form there is a statement following a check box which reads, "Don't Prompt to Split Unmatched Payments.' DO NOT check that box. When you receive a payment different than what is charged, click the 'P' box for paid and then change the amount in 'Payments' to the amount you actually received. Press 'Enter' and a message will pop up which says. 'The amount paid is different than the amount billed. Do you want to split this transaction?' Select 'Yes.'

- If the amount paid is **less** than the amount charged, SWAMP will change the amount charged to the amount paid, and change the 'To Date' to the number of days covered by the amount paid. SWAMP will then create another line charging the tenant for the remainder of the rental due and changing the 'Due' and 'To Date' to match the remainder of the month not covered by the payment. Will this postpone the date when this tenant will be charged a late fee? Yes, it will, but remember you have the money for the bulk of the month – so why a late fee?
- If the amount paid is **more** than the amount charged, SWAMP will change the amount charged to the amount paid and then extend the 'To Date' by the number of rental days actually paid. This will put the 'To Date' later in the month which may cause a rental charge not to be made if you set your date early in the month. As with users who don't prorate the first month but who want to charge the prorated amount for the second month, the recommendation is to set the generation of rentals to anyone due up to the end of the next month, instead of early.

Will SWAMP keep accurate payment records if I decide I don't want to split payments? Yes. What will happen is that an invoice will be created for the normal amount, but will also show a past due or a credit – depending on whether the payment was over or under – and the total charged will be adjusted to the correct amount due. However, your 'Payments' record will be a lie as to the period of time these unmatched payments cover. An example: a user called me to ask what to do when his tenant paid October's rental charge of $100 with a check for $150. I explained the process, but he objected to having the 'To Date' [and therefore, the next 'Due' date] moved to the middle of November, so he didn't split. The tenant was billed for November and again paid $150 on a $100 billing. Again the user would not split payments and left the tenant's 'To Date' as 01 December.   Come December billings and I get a call from this user wanting to know why this tenant got a billing, since he had paid three months rent. The reason this tenant got a billing was that the 'Payments' record said that he had paid only to 1 December – which was a lie.

Moving a tenant out of the facility

When a tenant vacates a unit, go to that Tenant's form and click the 'Rentals' tab. At the right of this form, click the button 'Move Out.' The 'Move Out' wizard will walk you through the process. The first question asked is the date of the move, which you enter and then click 'OK.' A series of questions may then pop up, depending on whether this tenant owes money for rental, has a refundable deposit, has paid for more time in the unit than the move out date, etc.

You will be asked what you want to do in each case. After you have answered all the questions, the payment record of this tenant will show a zero balance and the 'Paid To' date will be the same as the 'End' date. An invoice will be created for any refund you indicated that is due the tenant.

Creating and printing an internal lease

From the SWAMP Home Menu, click on 'Customize' and then on the tab, 'Lease.' On the form which then opens, select 'Internal Lease' and then click on 'Compose Lease.' Create the wording you wish printed at the top of your lease in the section labeled 'Header:' Note that you may format this header as to font, size and color.

In the section labeled 'Body,' write the lease. Use the 'Field Names' at the right for the merge fields that will make this lease individual – that is, apply to a particular tenant and to a particular unit. For example, use ~^FirstName^ ~^LastName^ to have SWAMP merge the tenant's name into the lease. Since the field names have their own formatting, we recommend that you create the entire body of the lease and then format it to your preference.

There is also a section labeled 'Footer' if you wish to use it for printing at the end of your lease.

The lease is printed from the 'Tenant' form. After all the tenant information has been entered, click on the 'Rentals' tab and then click the 'Lease' button. The lease will appear in 'preview' form. Print the lease by clicking 'Print' at the left top of the screen.

Creating and printing an external lease

In your word processor, create two files – one for the lease, and one for the tenant data. You can put them where you wish and name them what you will. I put mine in a folder I named, 'SwampExport.' I named the one file 'Lease.txt' and the other 'ExportMailTenant.txt.'

In SWAMP click on 'Customize' and select 'Lease.' Put a mark before 'External.' This will cause three fields at the right of the form to become active. In these three fields you are to enter the path to your word processor, your lease document and your data document. Because of where I put my files, I entered the following in those three fields;
C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\Office12\WINWORD.EXE
C:\SwampExport\Lease.txt

C:\SwampExport\ExportMailTenant.txt

Select a tenant and click on the 'W' icon to send that tenant information to the 'ExportMailTenant.txt' file.

Return to the Lease.txt form and create your lease, using the merge fields from the 'ExportMailTenant.txt' file.

After your lease is set up, it is printed as is the internal lease, by clicking lease on the Rentals tab of the Tenant form. You may need to merge the data before printing from the 'File/Print' command.

Setting up and recording inventory

From the 'SWAMP Home Menu' click the button 'Customize' and then the tab 'categories.' On this form create a category for each type of inventory. Since 'Lock Purchase' is already a category, it should probably be used as the category for the buying and selling of locks. From the 'Customize/Categories' form click on the box at the bottom to display all 'hard wired' categories. You may make adjustment to the default amount and whether or not it is taxable. Other characteristics you may not change.

For example:
Lock Purchase Locks $10.00 Income Inventory Taxable

Enter the purchase of items for the inventory on the 'Expenses' form. When you enter the category 'Lock Purchase' you will get a request to enter the number of items. Enter the number and then enter the total cost of the items.

When a tenant buys a lock, enter that purchase on the 'Payments' form. Again, you will be asked the number of items. You will be prompted that this is a taxable item and asked if you wish SWAMP to calculate the tax. Click yes and the amount will be entered as another line charge. When you enter the purchase in the 'Move-in Wizard' the tax will be entered without prompting. The tax rate is recorded by you on the 'Customize/Facility' form.]

From the 'SWAMP Home Menu. Click 'Reports' and select 'Inventory Reports.' Select a date range and click the icon to create the report. The report will have one line per inventory item and will show how many were purchased at what price and how many have been sold and at what price. The final item on each line shows items remaining in the inventory.

Rental Rates

Having the proper rates and raising them at the appropriate time is essential to a successful storage business. While we don't offer advice on what you do about rates, SWAMP makes it easy to set rates, adjust them, give special rates and keep a record of the changes you have made.

Rates are entered on the 'Units' form, and are usually the same for each unit of the same size except when a unit has special features, such as climate control or electricity. On the 'Customize/Facility' form you may enter a number in the field 'Guarantee Time' to correspond with the number of months that your facility will keep this rate the same for this tenant. That will cause a 'Rate Date' to appear on the tenant/rentals form which will be as many months ahead of the 'Move in Date' date as you indicated in 'Guarantee Time.' Until that date, the rate for this unit will not change. After that date it will revert to whatever rate is then on the 'Units' form.

Special rates may be given by overwriting the normal rate at the time of using the 'Move-in Wizard.' The normal rate will be displayed on the second screen. Simply change it to the special rate. At the same time check the 'Rate Date' which is just to the right of the rate to make sure it matches how long you wish the special rate to be in effect. When that date is passed, the rate will automatically return to the normal rate.

Changing rates is also easy with SWAMP. From the 'SWAMP Home Menu,' click on 'Maintenance' and then the 'Unit Rates' button. The form which opens lists the number of units which are of the same size, with the same characteristics, and with the same rates on a single line. Click on 'Update Rents' and three columns are added to this form labeled 'New Rates,' 'Effective Date' and 'Update Tenants.' Enter the new rate you wish for each grouping of units. The default for 'Effective Date' is today. Accept that or put in another date. If you check the boxes under 'Update Tenants' the rate for those tenants will change to the new rate, regardless of special rates or guarantee time. For this reason we do not recommend checking these boxes.

Click on 'Update Now' and all the rates you indicated will change. A pop up report will indicate how many units and tenants were updated. A record of these changes is kept by SWAMP on the unit form. When generating 'Economic Reports' the rate that was in effect during the time of the report is used.

Setting up and sending email from SWAMP

From the 'SWAMP Home Menu' click the button 'Letters' and from that menu, click 'Setup Emailer.' This form will have a few entries in it, but mostly blank. We have been fortunate that all we have had to do to activate email is to enter the name of our mail server – such as SMPT.Charter.net. Try this first, but if not successful, read the explanations available by clicking the '?' by each section.

Return to the 'Letters' menu and click on 'Customize E-Mails' where you will be able to create several standard e-mails for your use. Note the first one indicates the 'Subject' 'Invoices.' The function of this e-mail is to serve as a message to the tenant that the current invoice is attached. Enter your name or the facility name in the field "Email From:' you may also include names to which you wish to send copies or even blind copies. If you click the box after 'Delivery Receipt' you will receive a return email when your email has arrived. Clicking the box after 'Read Receipt:' will cause an email to you when the recipient had 'read' your email.

When you are ready to create the body of the email, click either 'Plain Text' or 'HTML.' The latter gives more flexibility in formatting, but not all tenants can receive it. Therefore, you should create the cover note in both 'Plain Text' and 'HTML.' When the email address is entered on the Tenants form, there is a button to check if they can receive 'Text Only.' Since this is intended to be a cover letter in sending an invoice, the message might be something as simple as:

 "Dear [FirstName] [LastName]
Attached find a current invoice for your storage rentals at CQrt Self Storage.
The management.

The merge field names used above are found in a list at the far right of the form. Select the merge field name, copy it then paste it in the body of the email.

Move back to the 'E-Mails/Settings.' Click the V at the end of the 'Subject:' field to get this list:

Invoice
Report - send a report to somec_
Late Notices
Late Notices Detail
Custom E-Mail A
Custom E-Mail 2
Custom E-Mail 3
Custom E-Mail 4
Custom E-Mail 5
Custom Tenants E-Mail 1
Custom Tenants E-Mail 2
Custom Tenants E-Mail 3
Custom Tenants E-Mail 4
Custom Tenants E-Mail 5

The top four subjects on this list are all similar to that already discussed about the 'Invoice'

subject. The next two groups, however are a bit more complicated. The first group is intended to allow you several different messages about the units rented by the tenant – such as rents due, lock out status, etc. If a Tenant has several units, he will receive several copies of this email.

The second group of custom emails is to be addressed to the tenant and may cover any topic you wish to contact them about – intent to raise rents, thanks for their business, special perks for referring a new tenant, intention to sell their property, lien letters, etc.

As you open the body of the email for these two types, you may notice that the list of 'Field Names' to be used are different for these two types of custom emails.

Another major difference exists as to how these emails are sent. First, no tenant will receive an email unless that tenant's email address is entered on the 'Tenant/Info' form. To receive invoices via email that box must be clicked. There is also a box to indicate if this tenant can receive 'Text Only.' You mail these E-Mails from the following forms:

'**Invoices'** are e-mailed from the 'Activities/Print Bills' form, clicking the button labeled 'E-Mail Bills.'
'Reports' are sent from the 'Reports' menu. Highlight the report and then click the icon at the bottom of that form labeled 'E-Mail.'
'Late Notices' and 'Late Notices Detail' are sent from the 'Activities/Setup Late Notices/Print Late Notices' form by clicking the button 'E-Mail Notices.'
To send the '**Custom E-Mails,'** click on 'Letters' then 'Custom Mail Merge.' In the panel at the left of this form select the tenants you wish to receive this E-Mail. You may select them all from a button at the bottom of the form. Then select the custom email you wish to send from this sub form.

Click the button to the right to send the email.