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Seminars

New seminars are scheduled for the Spring. Based on customer requests we have a new Labor Contractor seminar focusing on Payroll, Labor Reports and Accounts Receivable. We also will be offering a Food Processor seminar, marking the release of an updated program manual. Cost Accounting, Accounts Payable and Payroll seminars are also scheduled. See the enclosed schedule for seminar information, dates and times.

DATATECH NEWS

Datatech Updates its Software!

Datatech has recently updated our in-house accounting software. This means that our quotes, work orders and invoices will have a slightly different look. We hope that they will be easier to read for our customers and help us streamline our billing operations. As mentioned in the past, Datatech mails a single invoice. You do not need to send this, or a copy of it, back with payment. Please just note your account number and invoice number on the check or stub.

Office Closed

Datatech's office will be closed on the following dates:

- Monday, May 30th
- Monday, July 4th
- Friday July 22nd

New Software Ready

At the World Ag Expo, February 8-10, in Tulare, Datatech released its Vehicle Maintenance software to the public. This software is designed to track scheduled vehicle maintenance and unscheduled repairs, along with parts used and costs. The development for this software began in the Fall of 2002. Over the past year we have improved some of the program features and written a manual for the program.

We are currently planning to release an evaluation of the software to all Datatech customers with a mid-year update this summer. If you would like to evaluate the program sooner, please call Hannah at ext. 101.

Sales Tax Rate Change

Fresno's sales tax rate has changed as of April 1st. The new rate is 7.975%. If you have received a quote recently from Datatech and the items have not been delivered, your final invoice will reflect the new rate. Other counties that have sales tax changes include Stockton, Los Banos, Farmersville, along with 13 others.

If you sell products that require sales tax be collected, remember to enter the new rates. A complete chart of city and county tax rates can be found at:

<http://www.boe.ca.gov/pdf/pub71.pdf>

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CHANGE IN S.S.N. PRINTING ON CHECKS

In the Fall 2003 DataLine Newsletter, Datatech included information on California requirements for payroll check stubs. This included the requirement to print the employee's entire social security number on the stub. At the time, a bill in the California Senate was under consideration to allow the removal of the social security number from the stub for privacy reasons.

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EMAILING REPORTS FROM DATATECH SOFTWARE

Recently we have had inquiries on the best way to handle emailing reports from Datatech Accounting software. Following is a brief summary of two of your options:

No Cost

Datatech uses a print program called Virtual Print Engine for all reports. Reports from Datatech software can be emailed as a "VPE" file. The VPE file is a proprietary format that can only be viewed by using the VPE Viewer program.

The VPE Viewer is a small program that can be sent to the user at anytime and installed so that the recipient can view and print reports that you have emailed in VPE format. To send a report, click on the email button on the Print Preview to start an email message with the VPE as an attachment.

To receive this viewer program, please call Hannah at ext. 110. A copy will be sent to you and you can copy it and send it to those you wish.

In the future, this email feature will be updated to create a standard Adobe Acrobat Reader (PDF) file instead of the VPE file. The PDF format is the de facto standard for sending, viewing and printing electronic documents. To view documents in PDF format, the recipients will need the freely available Adobe Acrobat Reader software, which is pre-

installed on nearly all computers now.

Send PDF Files Now for Little Cost

You can create PDF files now by purchasing a PDF printer driver. When you preview a report in your Datatech Accounting program (as well as any Windows program) you can select the PDF driver. Then a window will appear to enter a file name. This saves the report on your hard drive, then you can go to your email and send it as an attachment.

The PDF printer driver is a good choice especially if you want to be able to create PDF documents in other Windows programs. In fact, you can even combine printouts and reports from multiple programs into one PDF document. PDF documents can also be archived on your computer (think of it as a sort of electronic filing cabinet for your reports).

Where to get a PDF print driver

There are many different print drivers available on the Internet that will create PDF files. The one we use is from www.win2pdf.com. The cost is only \$35 (additional cost if you want a CD mailed to you or purchase a professional edition). You can download the software from their site and purchase it online using a credit card.

EMPLOYMENT LAW SUMMARY



Each year the Farm Employers Labor Service (FELS) releases a summary of employment requirements for agricultural employers. The summary comes in a tabbed, three ring binder divided into the following topics: Cal/OSHA, Pesticides, Wage-and-Hour Requirements,

Farm Labor Contractors, Employment Insurance, Child Labor, Transportation, Housing, Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ALRA), Required Posters, Notices and Disclosures, and Discrimination.

While the guide is not a comprehensive review of all laws and regulations affecting labor and employment, it is designed to be a handy reference to the major ones.

The 2005 version of the Summary of Employment Requirements for Agricultural Employers is available for \$47.41 (includes sales tax and handling). FELS and Farm Bureau members receive a discount. For more information, or to order the summary, call (800) 753-9073.

INSPECTORS RETURN TO FIELDS

For many years the enforcement of farm labor laws were relaxed in the state of California. "No longer", says Vicky Bradshaw, secretary of the Labor and Workforce Development Agency, "This is the beginning of what we hope is a long process. We want to make long-term positive change in an industry that has a large number of vulnerable workers." On August 31st, surprise visits were made to 43 farms in the six-county region around Fresno. Officials cited violations for non-payment of minimum wage, not providing toilets and drinking water in the fields, irregular payment of wages, hiring children and charging for work tools. On one visit, an employee reported having to pay for his own grape knife, not being paid in 16 days and not knowing how much he was earning. Jose Millian, Bradshaw's deputy, said they may move to revoke the license of the labor contractor who hired the employee, "We have to do it to send the lesson that we expect the farm-labor contractor to be responsible." *Source: FELS Newsletter, vol. 33, No. 12*

Make sure you are meeting all labor laws and requirements. Reviewing the Employment Law Summary may help.

NEXT GENERATION OF DATATECH SOFTWARE

As technology continues to advance, so do the tools for creating programs like Datatech's Windows accounting software. As mentioned in previous Newsletters, Datatech uses a product from Data Access called Visual DataFlex (VDF) to write its software.

Most Datatech customers, including our farmers and labor contractors are currently using version 7.3 of VDF. Food processors, shippers and customers with custom programs are using either version 8.2 or 9.0. For each customer, we must keep track not only of what program they are using but also what version of VDF they are running. As you can imagine, this can complicate the process of preparing updates for our customers.

To streamline the update process and make it possible to bring the latest features to all of our customers, all customers currently on versions 7.3 or 8.2 will be updated to 9.0 with the next update planned for June.

The foundation for this update has already been laid. With the year end update the VDF 9.0 Runtime was installed. With the new Runtime software installed, all Datatech customers will have their computers ready to run the next generation of Datatech accounting software.

A few things to keep in mind:

The new program will not require any more hard drive space. However, we do recommend that customers evaluate their computer performance and processing capabilities. Pentium II processors and 128 Mb of RAM are the minimum computer recommendations. We are aware that a few customers are using computers that don't meet these specifications. We highly recommend a computer upgrade for these customers.

For some customers using Datatech accounting software on networks, there may be some changes with regard the multi-user licensing. We will contact individual customers with more information regarding these changes.

This update will set up new icons to run the new version of your Datatech accounting software. In many cases, the new icons will simply replace your existing icon. In other cases, you will need to make sure you delete the old icon and start using the new icon. For instance, some customers rename their icon from "The Farmer's Office" to simply "Datatech". In these cases, the installation program will create a new icon called "The Farmer's Office", but it will not replace or delete the original icon that you renamed "Datatech".

What are the benefits of the new version?

Using newer development tools allows us to deliver more up to date applications. For instance VDF 7.3 was released in 1999, long before Windows XP was released. VDF 9.0 on the other hand includes support for the either the new XP "look and feel" or the Classic Windows user interface.

Another new feature is a backup and restore utility. Once you have installed version 9.0, you can back up your accounting files through an option on the Tools menu. This will allow you to backup individual companies quickly, without using a separate backup program. You can also set a regular schedule for automatically performing backups.

This update will also include the ability to email your reports in Adobe's PDF format (see article on page 2 for more details).

More details on these and additional features will be included when the update to version 9.0 is released.

(Continued from page 1, Change in S.S.N. Printing on Checks)

We have now been notified that SB 1618 was passed last year. The bill does the following:

By January 1, 2008, employers, as well as state, city, county and other government entities, are required to show no more than 4 digits of the employees social security number on their itemized statement (check stub). The new law allows for an alternate employee identification number or only 4 digits of the social security number to be used instead of the full number.

Even though the change is not required until 2008, Datatech expects to have options added to the program for this law change completed this summer. At this time we are planning to release an update with the Summer Newsletter.

An option will be added to the Program Setup to allow you to select no number printed at all, the last 4 digits to be printed, and an option to continue printing the entire number for companies located outside California.



TECH TALK

THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE PURCHASING A LAPTOP

More often than not, a laptop purchase becomes an impulse buy. Free options, rebates, and specials often entice a purchase before you thoroughly consider your needs. Following are items to consider before purchasing your next notebook.

- Be clear about what you expect your laptop system to do now and in the future. You do not want to purchase a system, only to find out 6 months later, it does not have the power to do what you want it to. If you plan to edit pictures, video, or audio clips you'll want a high-capacity hard drive. Also, if you plan to use a broadband connection for the internet, make sure the system comes with integrated Ethernet.
- Manage your budget. Options can add up fast. 512 Mb of memory is fine for most systems, so upgrading to 1 Gb can be overkill and cost you a lot of money. Also, if you choose a high end video card, you will also be paying more for a display that can accommodate the card.
- Look for hidden costs in bundled packages. Free software, printers and other devices can add hundreds of dollars to the cost of your package.
- Some notebooks don't offer support for legacy devices such as parallel printers, serial modems, and PS/2 mice. If you own such legacy devices, make sure your notebook includes the ports that the equipment can connect to, otherwise you'll have to purchase new devices also. Some notebook models offer optional docking stations that these devices can connect to.
- Read the fine print for hidden costs. Some offer limited warranties, which last less than a year. You'll pay a premium for support if you need assistance after the warranty expires. Also, check the "free" technical support hotline. If the number isn't toll free, you'll end up with extra costs on your phone bill, especially since hold times for tech support are notoriously long.
- Consider your options beforehand, including:
 - Display** - Screens range from 10 to 17 inches diagonally and come in half a dozen resolutions. Wide-screen displays are becoming more popular for DVD viewing, but total size is about the same.
 - Processor Speed** - The main processors available are from AMD and Intel. The top-speed Pentium M's clock speed may seem low at 1.4 to 1.7 GHz, but it performs as well as a desktop Pentium 4 does at 2.6 to 3.0 Ghz, because of the optimized design. The older Pentium III-M, is roughly equivalent to the Pentium III desktop processors. AMD has the fastest CPU for Notebooks. The Mobile AMD Athlon 64 is the newest processor and the performance won't fully be seen until the first 64-bit Windows applications are in use. You can also find 32-bit AMD CPU's, Mobile AMD Athlon XP-M and the discontinued Mobile AMD Athlon 4.

Hard Drive - Most hard drive capacities range from 20 Gb to 60 Gb. 40 Gb should be fine for most users, but if you plan on storing video, picture or audio files, you may want to go with the large hard drive. The majority of notebooks use between 4200 and 5400 rpm hard drives. The faster a hard drive spins, the better the system will perform.

Optical Drives - Notebooks will come with a CD-ROM, CD-ROM R or RW, DVD, or DVD R or RW. If you are not going to use a DVD drive, you can save yourself \$200-\$300 by purchasing a system with only a CD-R/RW.

Keyboard - If you are using the notebook as a desktop replacement, the keyboard should be just as comfortable. Before purchasing a notebook, trying typing on it.

Card Slots - If you are planning to use a digital video or audio camera, or use some other type of memory stick, make sure the notebook contains the necessary slots.

Battery - The notebook's battery rundown time is affected by the notebook's efficiency and the battery's size. The best way to compare battery time is watts per hour. The range for laptops is between 20 whr to 100 whr with the most typical being 50 whr.

Batteries don't last forever, they're good for 300 to 500 charge/discharge cycles. A 2-3 year old notebook may need a new battery.

Operating system - If you are using the laptop for business you may need Windows XP Pro which will run you \$75 to \$100 more than Home Edition. Windows XP also has a tablet edition to support the screen's writing ability. You will now also find Media Center edition that focuses on multimedia features.

Bundled software - Notebooks will often have software pre-installed and included in the purchase price. These may be of varying value, such as installing Microsoft Works instead of the Office Suite, which contains the full Word program, Excel and other software.

Docking Station/Port Replicator - If you're constantly attaching and detaching your notebook to your desk you can make your life easier with a port replicator or docking station. These devices are used to connect all the cords, such as power, monitor, printer, etc, so you do not need to connect and disconnect cords.

Warranties - One year parts and labor warranties are common, but you have to send the machine back to the manufacturer. If you can't live without your notebook for that long, look for expedited repair services with a three day turn around. Some notebooks are being sold with only 90 warranties and the option of extending it.

Ethernet/WiFi - Consider how you will be connecting to the Internet. Most laptops have a modem and wired Ethernet. You can also purchase laptops that are WiFi ready, meaning the wireless internet connection is built in allowing you to connect to the Internet without wires wherever wireless Internet is available like airports and business centers.