Newsletter #23 (May 13, 2006)

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What's New

Upcoming version status

For those awaiting the release of the next version, with all of the user customization options, your wait is coming to an end. We expect to release version 4.0 sometime in June. The 3rd beta version has just been released which contains most of the planned features, so it's primarily a matter of clean-up and testing for the next few weeks.

Online Reservations and Norton

A customer has reported that the latest version of Norton Internet Security program can cause problems with receiving online reservation requests. If you experience a problem with the Retrieve function then you may need to disable Norton Internet Security (or at least disable the part that scans incoming E-mail). I'm afraid we don't have more details, but we wanted to mention this in case the issue arises.

Q & A

The Save button is always greyed out

Q: The Save button is always grayed out, so I can only make backups, not save the database. How can I save he database without making backups?

A: Campground Master actually saves the database automatically every time you make a change, so there's no need to use Save (you may see "Saving database" flash briefly on the status bar at the bottom). You can turn off auto-saving (in which case the Save function would be important), but it auto-saves after every action by default. In fact if the Save function (the "floppy disk" icon) is blue instead of the normal grey, then that usually indicates a problem that needs to be corrected immediately so you don't lose your data.

Reporting people with deposits due

Q: We require deposits for all campsites within 14 days of making a reservation, is there a way to check who has deposits outstanding that should have deposits in at that time?

A: Take a look at the Payments Due tab. Click on the Options for it, and you can select "Pending, and:", "Reservation was made more than 14 days ago". Also check "Show pending only if NO payments", but DON'T check "Show pending only if there is a balance due".

Reporting all reservations for the season

Q: How do I get a list of all reservations for the upcoming season?

A: In Reservations / Find Reservations, just check the "Filter by date" box and select the From & To date range for the season (make sure "Resv period" is selected, not "Date resv made"). Also make sure "Filter by" is NOT checked, so you're only filtering by the date range. Now it should show all reservations for the season.

You can also get this in a possibly more useful way by using the On Site tab view. Again just select the From and To dates as needed and it will show all reservations scheduled for that period. Make sure the "Current only" box is NOT checked, so it will also show future reservations rather than just the ones currently checked in.

"No Site" cells on the Rack

Q: Why is "No Site" all over the Rack, and how do I fix it?

A: This is covered in the documentation (and there's a quick answer shown when you right-click on one of the No Site cells), but we still get quite a few calls about this because it can be scary the first time it happens. So we're repeating the information here so hopefully you won't be startled when it happens.

Occasionally you may see "No Site:1" (or some other number) in a cell that should otherwise be open. (If the number won't fit in the cell, you will see the "..." ellipsis and can place the mouse over the cell to see the full number.) This indicates that there are reservations for this date which have not been assigned sites, and this will appear in every open site cell for each date that has unassigned reservations. This is essentially a warning that you should not fill the open sites for that date until the unassigned reservations have been assigned sites, or that you should at least leave enough sites open to satisfy the unassigned reservations -- or that you've made a mistake and created a reservation without a site assigned to it.

To assign a site to the reservation or to cancel accidental unassigned reservations, you can go to the Unassigned Tab View where they will be listed for the date range selected. Alternatively you can right-click on a "No Site" cell on the Rack and select "View Unassigned reservations for this date". From there you can view the Reservation Details for any unassigned reservations and use "Assign or Change Site" to assign it to the proper site. Alternatively if it's an accidental duplicate you can Cancel or Delete the reservation.

Cleaning up cancelled reservation charges

Q: I have some reservations that I had cancelled and did not zero the balances, so I need to clean those up. Could you email me step-by-step instructions?

A: It's difficult to give details since there are many possible issues that might need "cleaned up", but here are some basic tips for handling cancellations:

If you have version 3.6 and you're using auto-rates, go into Maintenance / Program Options / Auto-rates, and check the bottom box ("Assume no auto..."). Then if you go back into the cancelled reservation and click Auto-Calculate, it may clean itself up (negate the original auto-charges).

If that doesn't solve it, then basically you need to enter opposing Charge transactions, e.g. for each previous charge, enter an equal one with a negative quantity to balance it out (don't forget to select the same category as the original charge, and apply applicable taxes). You want to end up with a negative balance equal to the original deposit or payment made, or if no deposit or payment was made then you want a $0 balance.

You can also add a cancellation charge if necessary, which will reduce the amount of refund to be given (if any).

Finally, if you need to refund the deposit or payment then enter an appropriate Refund transaction to balance it out.

Checking out with a balance

Q: When someone leaves owing a balance or has a refund coming, how can I check them out of the space so I can put someone else there? I don't want to zero the account out until the last transactions have been made in order to keep the shift report right.

A: You don't actually have to do "check out" in order to put the next reservation in the site or check the next one in (though there may be warnings or restrictions based on the operator's Access Level). Of course if they leave before their scheduled date and you need to get them out of the way, then you should adjust the Last Night accordingly for when they actually left so that someone else can be put on the site. (I assume you know that if someone is departing on the morning of the 4th then their Last Night should be the 3rd, so the next reservation can start on the 4th.)

Either way, you can just leave them checked in until it's settled, or you can set the program's options so that it does allow checking them out with a balance (see Maintenance / Program Options / Functions, uncheck "Don't allow a reservation to be checked out if it has a balance".

Tips & Techniques

Avoiding $0 charges for add-on rates

If you use auto-rates and a lot of your reservations end up with a charge of $0 for add-ons like Extra people or Extra pets when they have no extra people or pets, it's likely that the rate definition isn't quite correct. This is a common mistake in the understanding of the "Applies if reservation field" setting of a rate definition.

For each of your add-on rates where you have:
Applies if resv field _________ is >= ___ Per each more than ___

The first number should generally be 1 greater than the second, for instance:
Applies if resv field _# Pets_ is >= _1_ Per each more than _0_

This is because >= means "greater than OR equal to", so you only want it to use the rate if it's greater than or equal to 1 pet. For instance if you had 0 for the first number, it would try to add the rate even when there are no pets. While the total is $0 and doesn't affect the charges, you don't really want it to show the extra pets charge of $0 on the receipt (not to mention being needless extra junk in the database).

Likewise if you charge for any adults more than 2, the rate should look like:
Applies if resv field _# Adults_ is >= _3_ Per each more than _2_

Partial refunds to a credit card

(This only applies if you're processing credit cards through Campground Master.)

There will be times when you need to do a partial refund to a credit card, for instance if they decide to leave early or if a mistake was found after processing the card. There are a couple ways to handle this, depending on the situation.

One way is to Void the original payment, then just run it through again with the correct amount. However this has a few drawbacks:

1. It can only be done on the same day as the original payment (before the daily settlement is done).

2: You probably need to have the card available to swipe again, since the Void will delete the original payment along with its credit card information.

3. It's possible that it may not be approved the second time, since the amount of the original payment is still "held" until settlement. If they're close to their limit, it may not approve the additional charge.

The other way is to simply enter a Refund transaction for the difference. After adjusting the rates as needed (which should result in a negative balance for the credit due), use the "Refund" function to credit the difference to the credit card. This can be done any time, and the credit card information is available from the original payment so they don't need to be present. While not quite as "clean" in the results, it works in any situation and provides a better audit trail of information.