Newsletter #8 (July 21, 2005)

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What's New

Campground Master News now available as an RSS feed

If you don't know anything about RSS then you might want to skip this.

However if you already use an RSS reader for other news sources, then you may want to add our feed to your subscriptions. You might also want to check this out if you're interested in this new RSS technology -- it can be quite useful for other news sources also.

For the most part the content of our news feed will just be these newsletters (actually just the table of contents with links to the articles on our web site). We may add an occasional special item that's not appropriate for a newsletter, but at the moment we can't imagine what that might be. We may also use RSS feeds for beta testing information and updates, so if you want to beta test future versions then you might want to start familiarizing yourself with RSS.

Why use the RSS feed? Primarily it avoids the common problems with getting announcements by E-mail -- spam blockers, E-mail system glitches, changing E-mail addresses, accidentally deleting E-mail, etc. It also makes it easy to reference previous newsletters (they will remain on the feed).

If you don't have an RSS reader and would like to try one for free, download the Active Web Reader on this site:
http://www.deskshare.com/awr.aspx

One you have an RSS reader (also called an "aggregator"), you can add our feed to your reader by copying and pasting the following URL into your reader:
http://campground-master.com/news/cm_news_feed.xml

(Don't' try to open that URL directly, it won't be very interesting!)

You'll see the contents of all of our newsletters with handy links to each article.

If anyone knows of other RV or campground related RSS feeds that Campground Master users may find interesting, let us know and we can spread the word.

Bug: Pole Display settings have an incorrect default

If you're using a Logic Controls pole display with the Point of Sale module, you might have noticed that it only shows one line on the display. Perhaps you didn't even realize something was missing.

We have found that the default for one of the settings does not work properly for the Logic Controls pole display. (However the examples in the documentation are correct, so you may have already fixed this yourself .)

The correct setting for "Line 2 command: Before text" is "**\x0d\x0a**" (the \x0a was left out of the default).

To make sure it works, click the "Test Line 1 & Line 2" button -- it should show both lines of text.

Q & A

Hiding some sites from the Rack

Q: My seasonals are at the top of the Rack and On Site views because they are the lower numbers, so I have to scroll every time to get to the daily sites. How can I hide them until I need them since they're not very active?

A: Technically you could just move the seasonal sites down below the others, since they don't technically have to be in numerical order. (See Newsletter #1 for help rearranging sites on the Rack.) However if you don't want them shown at all, there's another way. You can set up a "default filter" for the Rack view and the other views so that it only shows the sites you want to see most of the time.

To do this, drop down the "All Site Types" list at the top of the view, and select "Default ..." at the very bottom of the list. This will show a site filter where you can choose which sites (or types, or classes, etc) you want to see normally.

Once this default is set, it will be used instead of "All" site types whenever you use the Reset / Today button. If you do want to see something different, drop down the list to pick the site type, etc. you want to see.

Note that for networked systems, this default filter is separate for each workstation. This allows you to set up different views for different locations, but you will need to set up the default filter for each workstation.

Fixing a checked out reservation

Q: I have a reservation that's in Dark Grey on the Rack (checked out) but he's still here, and I can't get him in the Green as all paid up. How do I fix this?

A: You can undo the check-out so it's checked in again. Just go to its Reservation Details, and click on the "Checked In" checkbox in the upper right Status area. This will undo the checkout and change him to Checked In.

This same procedure can be used if someone was checked out in the system but has decided stay longer. After you undo the check-out, you can change the Last Night appropriately.

Find and fix reservations with missing How-Heard info

Q. I don't like to leave the How-heard information blank on reservations, but sometimes my staff forgets to enter it. Is there an way to force this to be entered, or at least an easy way to find the ones that don't have it?

We'll be allowing compulsory fields later, but in the meantime here's an easy way to find the missing ones:

1. Go to Reservations / Find Reservation (or just press Ctrl-F)
2. Click the "Reservation Filtering" button.
3. In the How Heard list in the lower left, select "(Unknown)" -- it's at the bottom of the list.
4. Uncheck both the "Filter by date" and "Filter by" boxes.

That should list all reservations missing the How Heard -- double-click each one to get to Reservation Details and fill in the How-Heard field.

Before closing the Find Reservation dialog, you might want to check the "Filter by" box again so it doesn't waste time showing all reservations next time you open it.

Tips & Techniques

Creating split reservations on separate sites

Once in awhile you may have to move someone to a different site in the middle of their stay, either at their request or because there are no sites open for their whole stay.

For a requested move in the middle of their stay, you can split an existing reservation from the Rack view (right-click on the date to start the split), and then change the site assignment for the second part.

But if you need to split the reservation to start with (because the site isn't available for their whole stay), there's another way to do it. You can start by making a reservation for the first part, then add a linked sub-member reservation for the second part. You can do this all at once while still in New Reservation by following this procedure:

- Start the new reservation.
- Select the dates for the first part and pick the site (so the site shows in "Site(s) added" as usual.
- Check the "Sub-member of" box below the grid (instead of "synchronized").
- Change the dates for the second part,
- Select the other site. It will show in "Site(s) added" with a ">" in front of it.
- Complete the reservation as usual.

This will create two linked reservations, which will be billed together.

One thing that this doesn't solve is that auto-rates won't treat them as a continuous stay -- for instance if they stay 3 days on one site and 4 on the other, it won't give them the weekly rate because it's not a continuous stay in the same reservation. In this case you would have to manually give them an appropriate discount, or override the auto-rates to select the weekly rate (in Reservation Details, check "Disable auto-rate recalculations" if necessary).

Reporting the amount of taxable sales and tax collected

Most businesses need to fill out a quarterly sales tax report for your state (or similar reporting for other taxes). For these reports you need to find the amount of sales tax collected and the amount of sales revenue that was taxed.

Assuming that you're using the tax categories and auto-tax calculations as designed in the software (as opposed to including tax in your prices to make them even dollar amounts), getting the amount of sales tax collected is easy:

- Click on the Transactions tab view.
- Click the "Summary Options" button (if you don't see Summary Options, check the Summarize box first),
- Click the "Taxes by Tax Category" button under Quick Reports.
- Click "Summary Options" again.
- Select the "Quarterly" option in the Summarize period group.
- Click the "Filter..." button and select the appropriate From and To dates for the quarter, then click OK.
- Click OK again.

This will show the actual amount of tax income for the quarter, for each tax category.

Note: If you normally use Receipts by Category for reporting as of the date actually collected, you can do this instead of Taxes by Tax category.

Campground Master doesn't specifically flag each charge transaction as to whether it's taxable or not, so to get the amount of sales taxed then you may need to reverse-calculate it. For instance if your tax rate is 5% and the tax collected is $100, then the amount taxed would be $100 / .05 = $2000.

However you can also set up the Transaction Categories to make it easier to get the amount taxed. Ideally you want to make sure that any taxable charges go in separate categories from non-taxable ones. Here are a couple ways you can do this:

In the simplest case, perhaps Daily and Weekly rates are taxed but Monthly rates are not -- so you can just add the daily and weekly charges and leave out Monthly. You might even want to add a "T" in front of the categories that are taxed.

If the division is not quite as clear, for instance if some daily stays are non-taxed due to government-employee discounts, then you could add a "Daily non-taxed" category for this. Be sure to set up your Rates so that the correct category is used for taxed vs. non-taxed rates.

Keep in mind that most Discounts are pre-tax, so those need to be subtracted from the taxable Charges for calculate the amount taxed. Again, if some discounts apply to non-taxed categories, then you can make a separate category for non-taxed discounts.