

NAHMAanalysis

News and Analysis of Breaking Issues in Affordable Housing

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TRACS Version 2.0.1.B Conversion

Last week HUD held the usual quarterly TRACs and Contract Administration focus group meetings. The most important piece of news coming out of the meetings is that HUD has now set the "Must be installed" date for Version 2.0.1.B of TRACs. That date is May 1, 2002.

You will have to have your new version of TRACs installed and operating for the transmission of the June 2002 voucher which has to go in no later than May 10th.

The 2.0.1.B conversion is not to be confused with the conversion to TRACsMail that many of you are now completing.

Before you start looking on your desk for your copy of the 2.0.1.B software be aware you may or may not have it just yet. Some vendors have shipped the new software version and you will have it, some vendors have not yet shipped 2.0.1.B. If you have not received your upgrade from your vendor you will want to contact them to determine the shipping schedule. Several large vendors are starting to ship this week and next.

HUD has told us that this installation due date is absolute. If you do not have version 2.0.1.B of TRACs installed as of May 1, 2002 you will not be paid in June. No transmissions using the 2.0.1.A version of TRACs will be accepted after May 1.

In a related area, as many members know, a significant number of old Contract Administrators do not use either TRACsMail or version 2.0.1.B of TRACs. HUD is going to set a date certain for all of those CA's to get on the new systems, and will require that all CA's accept data electronically using the TRACsMail system, and the current version of TRACs. We understand reliably that the date certain will probably be July 1, 2002. In recent days Illinois tried to introduce a new non secure E-mail system to replace Sprint Mail. They have been told they may not introduce a new "legacy" system at this point, they will have to use TRACsMail. All remaining "legacy" systems must be made compatible with the current HUD standards by the date certain.

George's Spin - When we started this process last October, we were promised that we would not be put in the position of having to run two conversions right on top of each other. As events have unfolded, that is exactly where we have ended up. We've protested this decision with great vigor. We are still working on getting a meeting with folks in the most senior positions in HUD to get this reversed, we have had no success in the week since the decision was announced.

Pushing from an installed base of 5 sites reporting on 2.0.1.B in March to 22,000+ sites reporting on 2.0.1.B in May is somewhere between insane and impossible. The decision makers at HUD are steadfast, they have decided this is how it is going to be, and will not consider making this schedule more rational. There are external political decisions pushing this, most particularly a need by HUD to get some long promised, and not yet delivered data on use of Handicap units to Congressman Rod Frelinghuysen (R, NJ 11th). It turns out that the data will needed will not be immediately available even with the installation of 2.0.1.B , and HUD will be contacting us to gather it manually in the coming months.

Several vendors we have spoken with have significant reservations about shipping software that in their view has not been adequately tested in a production environment. I share those concerns, having run large data processing operations earlier in my career I am painfully aware of how forced conversions with close drop dead dates can go wrong. With only 5 people on the HUD TRACs help desk, unanticipated problems may well take a long time to sort out.

You need to look carefully at your situation in light of the deadline and begin working as fast as possible to get the software in place, tested, and ready to go. From today there are 28 working days to get TRACs 2.0.1.B in place. The TRACsMail deadline remains March 30, six working days away. All the software vendors are well aware of the implementation schedule, and they are working to get things in place as quickly as possible.

If you are still wrestling with the TRACsMail conversion and have password problems, Aspen Systems has been hired by HUD to help, their number is 800-685-8470. The E-Mail address is mfhc@aspensys.com. This desk is handling password issues exclusively. The desk was closed for several days last week, but is now up and operating.

We will watch this situation carefully, and will update you with any changes, you will want to check the NAHMA website regularly, we will post any changes or issues of general interest on the main page. HUD has recently changed the location of the TRACs forum and announcement pages, the new location is <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/mfh/trx/trxsum.cfm>