

Transparent Billing



Ingrid Himmelman
National Business
Process Manager,
FirstOnSite Restoration

New, proprietary technology has enabled transparent billing for work undertaken on large, complex commercial losses.

In an emergency situation, especially those involving large commercial losses, the primary focus is mitigation and reduction of business interruption. Crews need to get to work as soon as possible. The Strategic Research Institute in the United States says: “Companies that aren’t able to resume operation within 10 days of a disaster are not likely to survive.”

Tracking costs following a large loss or complex commercial mitigation can be tricky. An inordinate number of variables often need to be tracked and incorporated into your billing. Each insurer and customer has different needs requiring unique contracts. On top of that, a number of properties, tenants and owners may require separate, detailed and accurate billing. How, in all of that chaos, when speed of service is pre-eminent, do you accurately keep track of who did what for whom? How does an

insurer or a commercial customer know the invoice they receive is an accurate reflection of true costs?

INTRODUCING NEW TECHNOLOGY

Today, standard practice seems to involve a “get-the-job-and-we’ll-worry-about-the-billing-later” approach. This taxes the memories of managers, who must try to recall details such as how long a crew or piece of equipment was on site. Hunting down such information further delays the billing process. When the bill is presented, a lack of strong backup documentation often leads to a lengthy audit process and negotiation before the final price is settled. Until now, that is.

When presented with a bill for a large loss, insurers and commercial customers have three primary questions:

- How did you gather your data?
- On what did you base your pricing?
- How did you get to the final bill?

A new software system to the Canadian marketplace (called Time and Materials PLUS and exclusive to FirstOnSite Restoration) answers all three questions with confidence, accuracy and transparency.

A U.S.-based, licensed restoration professional, someone who has spent countless hours working large loss restoration jobs south of the border, designed and developed the software. Frustrated by the lack of tools available for billing large time and material losses, he designed the software package specifically for this style of billing. It has been used successfully in numerous large loss and catastrophe restoration efforts, including Hurricane Katrina.

WHAT CAN IT DO?

One of the system's most powerful features is an ability to provide insurers and commercial clients with accurate and detailed reports and invoices. This is a result of the system's ability to deal with and track multiples — multiple units, multiple insurers, multiple crews and multiple buildings for the same loss.

With this software, FirstOnSite has the ability to input data across multiple allocations within one major file and then generate a pro-rated bill for each. The company can track and bill each unit, building or insurer file separately, depending on our customers' needs. For example, there is no need to create 55 estimates for 55 different units. Using this software, users can create just one file that generates 55 individual reports.

A second powerful feature of the software is that it enables users to integrate specific contract terms and pricing to reflect a customer's unique agreement at the beginning of the process. An insurer or customer's final bill and all related reports will incorporate these details. Furthermore, the software program has an internal audit feature enabling the user to make sure all entries conform to the agreement.

A third feature of the system is its speed of service. Data is gathered and inputted seamlessly and daily, making daily reporting possible. Safeguards are built into the software preventing duplicate entries and other common 'human' errors.

Finally, and most critically, the invoice produced for insurance and commercial customers is fully transparent. All data used to produce the final invoice is detailed and provided.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The billing process has six steps, with each step (except the first) driven by the previous step.

Step 1: The Contractual Agreement

The first step is to agree to contractual terms, including any mark-ups (P&O), per diems, hotel charges, overtime rules, equipment rates and labour rates. These terms will be incorporated into the job pricing file and drive the final bill.

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Step 2: Data Capture and Validation

On a daily basis, using formatted crew sheets, trained crews quantify hours worked, equipment installed, materials used, sub-trades hired, etc. The recording process is standardized across the country; regardless of where the loss takes place, all FirstOnSite employees are trained to complete the forms in the same way.

At the end of each day, a supervisor verifies all gathered data. Additionally, customers have the opportunity to validate the information if they so choose. The project manager then journals the work completed using the daily summary.

Step 3: Data Input

Verified data is input into the program file already tailored to an insurer's or customer's contractual terms. The program is designed for team inputting. Multiple individuals can input data to the same file and information is merged together. Safeguards are built into the program preventing any duplicate entries.

Step 4: Generate Reports

At any given time, reports can be generated showing labour and associated fees, equipment usage, materials and consumable cost. Reports can be printed detailing the entire file, or they can be broken out by specific allocation.

Step 5: Audit

The program has an internal audit module included. Once the bill has been fully input, all entries can be checked against the terms of the agreement stored in a master file. Any discrepancies are highlighted for review, and can be edited immediately. Revisions to the report can be completed quickly and a new report generated with a few clicks of the mouse.

Step 6: Final Bill

Insurers or customers receive a final bill consisting of the invoice, supporting reports and all back-up documentation. This would include project manager daily summaries, crew sheets listing hours, equipment and consumables, sub-trade invoices and hotel and per diem charges.

Quite simply, the program provides a straightforward way to gather daily site data comprehensively, apply it against the appropriate job/unit/building/area, and quickly produce a transparent and accurate series of reports — all supported and tailored to a specific insurer or customer agreement. From the beginning of the project, the final bill is kept in mind. The software is a powerful tool. The process behind it is even more powerful, and it is a source of pride to be able to offer it to insurance partners and customers. ☰