

NACHA

No, not Nachos, NACHA. This is the file system that banks use to perform Automatic Clearing House (ACH) transactions.

The ClerkBooks Utility Billing Module can create a NACHA formatted file for you. This will then give your customers the ability to setup Auto-Pay with you.

The process is pretty simple. You would start by creating an agreement form. Look for examples by Googling "ACH Agreement samples" and/or ask your Bank for a sample.

This form should include wording which gives you permission to automatically withdraw the amount of the current utility bill every month. It also collects the customer's bank name, routing number, account number, and account type.

Once you have that information, we can show you how to enter it into the system and how to create the NACHA file.

Once the file is created, you would log into a secure webpage at your bank and upload the file. The bank does the rest.

Usually banks will do this for free. Sometimes they charge a nominal monthly fee.

Let us know if you would like help getting started!



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Updated Chart of Accounts

It's sometimes hard to believe, but ClerkBooks has now been around for 15 years! We have had an amazing time since we first started with the City of Fertile, IA; the Village of Prague, NE; and the City of Marble Rock, IA. Our first three cities, and they are still with us today!

Over the course of the last 15 years, there have been several changes, both in how we process data and how we use the system. Many of the changes have been prompted by setting up new Charts of Accounts for new ClerkBooks' States. Other changes have been prompted by new State reports or requirements. By the end of this year, ClerkBooks will be used in over 145 cities in 25 states! If you haven't looked at our Map page under the About ClerkBooks menu of the website recently, you should take a peek when you get a chance.

For the most part, our original Chart of Accounts for each State has remained solid. They are still in use in many cities without any issues. However, if you compare the original Iowa and Nebraska Chart of Accounts to the Chart of Accounts we now use, you will find significant differences.

If you, your Council, and your Auditors are happy with your Chart of Accounts, there is absolutely no need to change. However, if you want to get all the new bells and whistles, you might want to consider upgrading. The new QuickBooks files will have more detail, more shortcuts, and more reports.

Upgrading your file would take 2-3 hours and the cost could come right out of your available support hours. If you would like to see a demo of a file with the new chart of account, new shortcuts and new reports, give us a call or send us an email. If you would like us to log-in with you and see if you already have the latest Chart of Accounts, we can do that as well.



Introducing a New Renewal Program for ClerkBooks Utility Billing and Closing Tools Modules.

All software (Windows, Microsoft Office, QuickBooks, etc) eventually expires and requires an upgrade. However, our ClerkBooks modules have been in use for 15 years and we have never charged an upgrade fee. Unfortunately, that has to change. Starting January 1st, 2021 ClerkBooks will start charging an annual renewal fee for access to our modules.

Anyone who started using ClerkBooks before February of 2015 will get an invoice for renewal in January, 2021.

Anyone whose install was in February of 2015, or later, will receive their first annual renewal invoice 5 years after their install, on the anniversary month of your installation.

Annual Renewal Fee Rates

Don't worry, it sounds worse than it is. Our current price for the Utility Billing module is \$450 with a required upgrade every 5 years.

The current price for the Closing Tools module is \$250 with a required upgrade every 5 years.

The new Annual Renewal fees will be \$100 per year for the Utility Billing module and \$50 per year for the Closing Tools module.

This is a \$50 increase (over 5 years) for the Utility Billing module and no increase for the Closing Tools module. It is just billed annually, rather than every 5 years.

Why Annually?

Quite honestly, it is easier for us to remember to bill the same amount every year than it is to remember to bill once every 5 years. I would assume it will also be easier for you to budget a smaller annual fee rather than a larger fee every five years as well.

What Are You Paying For?

Everyone's renewal fees will cover about 6 to 8 months of software development costs each year. Even though we don't release new versions every year like QuickBooks does; over the last 15 years we have released almost 100 updates and upgrades. Some of the key features we have added to Utility Billing include:

- AMR integrations (Sensus, Badger, Neptune, Kamstrup, Zenner, etc.)
- NACHA for ACH payments
- Automatic estimation of readings
- High/Low warnings
- Customer messages
- Due after due date message
- Previous balance message
- Support for multiple tax rates
- Ability to create invoices by zip code
- Meter Notes
- Multiple charges per service type
- Reports
- Sort and filter options
- Multi-user access
- And many more

Find Your Module Version

To get the most out of your investment, make sure you have the most recent version of each of the modules.

In both modules, go to the Help menu and select About. You will find the software version in the bottom left corner. The current versions are:

Utility Billing: 4.14.2008.1808
(updated August 18, 2020 at 8am)

Closing Tools: 2.14.2001.1010
(updated January 10, 2020 at 10am)

If, after checking for updates, your version does not match these numbers, give us a call. We will help you uninstall and reinstall your software before checking for updates again.

Can I Opt Out?

If your install was before January of 2014, yes, you can opt out. However, that means you will no longer receive updates or support for our Utility Billing Module or Closing Tools module. But you can still use the software and get support for QuickBooks and other topics.

Everyone after January 2014 received quotes that mentioned a required upgrade every 3-5 years. This is just a re-formatting of that requirement. Therefore, you cannot opt out and still stay a ClerkBooks customer.

We hope you won't want to opt out. It is truly our goal to help make your job easier. This small investment will help us do that for you.

MAY

JUNE

JULY

15

15

15

Save 5-10% when you setup recurring orders for supplies

You can now save money by setting up automatic recurring orders through the website.

Recurring orders do not require credit cards or ACH

payments. Instead, we will schedule an invoice to be emailed a couple weeks before the order is officially placed.

You can then get Council approval to send payment while we are already preparing your order.

This will help us manage our stock of supplies, and it guarantees you will always have the products you need, when you need them.

You can postpone your order, if your supplies are backing up. Vice Versa, you can add an additional order if your supplies get too low. And you can cancel the recurring order any time you want.

You can create recurring orders for utility billing postcards, bill payment checks and envelopes, or invoice envelopes. Check it out at wp.clerkbooks.com/order/ today!



Assistance for State, Local, and Tribal Governments

The CARES Act provides assistance for State, Local and Tribal Governments

The CARES Act established the \$150 billion Coronavirus Relief Fund.

The CARES Act requires that the payments from the Coronavirus Relief Fund only be used to cover expenses that

1. are necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19);

2. were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act) for the State or government; and

3. were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020.

Guidance on eligible uses of Fund disbursements by governments is available at: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares>

Look for the link that looks like the image at the top of this column.

Gone Phishing

Well, it looks like we have got the attention of another cyber criminal. We have had a couple customers receive emails, that at first glance, seem to be from ClerkBooks. They include a link to information about an overdue invoice. However, the link doesn't actually appear to do anything.

What Is Phishing?

When cyber criminals pose as legitimate businesses, that is called Phishing. They want you to click on a link, or open a document, that then attempts to download a virus.

What Should I Do?

As long as you do not click the link, or open the document, you are safe. It will not hurt your system. However, to stop receiving these scams, you should use your email program to report the email as Phishing. Do not just report it as spam.

What if I clicked the link?

If you clicked the link, or opened the document, run your virus scanner asap! You should also download and run a second virus scanner to double check. We suggest the free version of Malwarebytes.

How do I Know if it is Phishing or Legit?

The best way to tell is to hover over the "from" email address and look at the bottom of your screen. You should see the actual address the email is from. All of our email addresses are short and sweet (eddie@clerkbooks.com)

Also remember, ClerkBooks will **NEVER** ask for payment methods via email, or via our website. We will **ALWAYS** attach an invoice for the Council to approve.