

Local authority housing: a guide to using electronic claims forms

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On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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Front Cover

LASS2 Version

Guide Version 5.1 - Issued: April 2000

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Department introduced Electronic Claim Forms in 1996 to reduce the amount of work for local authorities in completing their claims for Housing Subsidies and Grants.

1.2. The old paper forms were prone to arithmetical and transcription errors which created extra work for the Department and local authorities and would often result in delayed payments.

1.3. In order to complete the forms, local authorities need special software called the Local Authority Sub-System (or 'LASS') software.

The original software was released in June 1996 and this included the application *Jetform Filler* to enable completion of the claim forms.

1.4. To keep pace with current technological developments and to ensure the Software meets year 2000 compliancy the Department issued a completely new version of the Software in June 1999. The new version is called LASS2. This has been issued to all local authorities and auditors on CD-ROM (floppy disks are available on request) and is designed to work on Windows 95 and NT4 operating systems. One upgrade was issued on floppy disk in February 2000.

1.5. Compatibility between LASS1 and LASS2

1.5.1. Forms issued since June 1999 will be unusable with LASS1, and, similarly, forms issued before June 1999 such as 9901, 9703 or 99B2 - will be unusable with the LASS2. Moreover, authorities will not be able to print paper copies of old forms using the new software.

1.6. Copyright and Restriction on the use of the Software

1.6.1. The *JetForm Filler* part of the Software is subject to commercial copyright. It is licensed to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions under the condition that it will be used only by local authorities and auditors for completing the Department's forms for housing subsidies and grant.

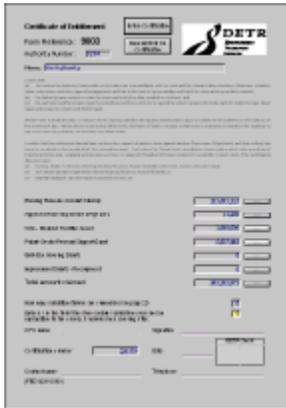
1.6.2. A copy of the license is at *Appendix A*.

1.7. Requirements to use electronic forms

1.7.1. The General Determination of Administration of Housing Revenue Account Subsidy requires all returns and claims shall be submitted on electronic disk using a Windows format. **(endnote - 1)**

1.8. Format and appearance of a form

1.8.1. The best way to find out what an Electronic Claim Form looks like is to call it up on screen (see chapters 4 and 6). Alternatively it can be printed (see paragraph 6.10).



2. The Forms Cycle and Overview of Procedures

2.1. How will the process work?

2.1.1. The Department will issue the Electronic Claim Forms on disk to each local authority at various stages throughout the year (**endnote - 2**) as follows.

Form	Date of Issue	Return (endnote - 3)
First Advance Claim form (01)	February	31 March
Second Advance Claim Form (02)	June	31 August
Pre-Audit Base Data Return (B1)	June	31 August
Audited Base Data Return (B2)	July	10 October
Advance (or Pre-Audit) Final Claim Form (03)	May-June	30 September
Audited Claim Form (04)	July	21 January

The dates above are a rough guide to the annual cycle of claim forms and base data returns

2.1.2. Each disk will be labelled to show the form reference and the local authority's name.

2.1.3. Each form will be pre-loaded with data specific to the local authority.

2.1.4. The local authority will use the Software to complete the forms.

2.1.5. Once the entries are complete, the local authority must certify the form electronically, using the Certify Disk button provided in the Software and print the Certificate for signature by the Chief Finance Officer.

2.1.6. The completed form should be returned on disk to the Department together with the signed Certificate. The Department does not require the authority to return the actual floppy disk issued; a copy is acceptable. Where authorities use a copy, they should take care to label it correctly.

2.1.7. The local authority must also keep a copy of the electronic form for their own records.

2.2. **Special Procedures** Relating to Advance and Audit Final Claim Forms and Returns Procedures

2.2.1. The arrangements for the Advance and Audit Final forms (03 and 04) and Base Data Returns (B1 and B2) are different as the local authority will need to:

- make two copies of the disk containing the completed Advance Final form (or Pre-Audit Base Data Return) onto separate disks; and
- take a photocopy of the signed Certificate; and
- the local authority will return the original disk to the Department and pass one of the copies of the disk together with a photocopy of the signed Certificate to the auditor for audit; the second copy is kept for their own records.

2.2.2. As well as sending the Advance Final form and Pre-Audit Base Data Return on disk to each local authority the Department will send the Audit Final version of the form on disk to the Audit Commission for distribution to appointed Auditors. Using the auditor version of the Software, the auditor will merge the data from the local authority's Advance Final form and Pre-Audit Base Data Return with the Audit Final version. The auditor will then audit the form. Once the audit work is complete, the auditor will certify the form electronically and return the Audit Final form (or Pre-Audit Base Data Return) on disk to the Department together with the signed certificate. At the same time the auditor should send a copy of the electronic form to the local authority.

3. **Technical Specification and Loading the Software**

3.1. The Forms Software must be loaded on a personal computer which has at least the following specification.

- 486 or Pentium PC;
- 32 Mb RAM;
- 120Mb free disk space;
- Microsoft Windows 95 or NT4 operating system;
- Colour graphics monitor with a graphics adapter card supported by Windows 95 or NT4; and
- Printer supported by Windows 95 or NT4.

3.2. The Software will operate on a PC with a higher specification. The Software must be installed to the PC's hard drive and should not run from a network.

3.3. Installing the Local Authority Sub-System (LASS) version 2.0 software on a 32 bit

Windows platform.

3.3.1. Set out below in this paragraph are the instructions for **local authorities** to install LASS2. The software is designed to operate on Windows 95 or Windows NT. If you are installing the software on Windows NT, you must be logged in as the user administrator.

3.3.2. **District Auditors** will be issued with separate installation instructions from the Audit Commission. But it is expected that they will be along the lines set out below.

3.3.3. **Installation Instructions:**

- Insert CD-ROM in the CD-ROM drive. (If you have requested the software on floppy disks, place the disk labeled Disk 1 of 5 in drive A:.)
- Click on the START icon.
- Highlight the SETTINGS icon.
- Click on the CONTROL PANEL icon.
- Click on the ADD/REMOVE PROGRAMS icon.
- Ensure that the INSTALL/UNINSTALL page is selected
- Click on the INSTALL button.
- Click on the NEXT button.
- Ensure that the COMMAND LINE reads:- (CD-ROM drive letter - usually D:, E: or F:)setup.exe i.e. E:\setup.exe.
- Click on the FINISH button.
- Welcome to LASS Installation Script' appears - Click on NEXT.
- Click on YES if a local authority, or (No then YES if an auditor).
- If you are installing from floppy disk, you will be asked to insert each disk in turn
- Click on the FINISH button when the installation is complete.
- Please restart your computer once installation is complete.
- Install any upgrades issued by the Department see chapter 9.

Form Options set-up.

3.4. **Before you use the form, please adjust the JetForm options.** All users must execute this procedure, in order to ensure that JetForm does not present them with a fresh form when they get to the end of the form see paragraph 6.5.

3.5. **From the JetForm Filler menu bar:**

- Click on Tools
- Click on Options...
- Click on the Data Entry tab (see diagram below)
- Make sure Wrap to the first field of current record is selected



Installing an icon in Windows 95

3.6.1. The installation procedure in NT will automatically create an icon on your desktop. In Windows 95 the same will apply but only if the user of the software also carried out the installation. If a different user installed the software please set up an icon using the following instructions:

- Right mouse click on the desktop;
- Select NEW;
- Select SHORTCUT;
- Select BROWSE;
- Select the file C:\GASP\BIN\LASS.EXE.;
- Click NEXT;
- Select an appropriate name for the shortcut;

>

- Click FINISH.

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4. Local Authorities and Auditors Using the Software

4.1. Local Authority Menu Window

4.1.1. Insert claim form disk and double click on the icon created to initiate the software. The following menu screen appears.

Figure 4.1 - Local Authority Menu



4.2. Completing a Claim a Form (Local Authorities)

4.2.1. To open a form, you should:

- open the menu window (see figure 4.1);
- insert the disk containing the form into the A Drive; and
- press the Complete Claim button on the menu window.

4.2.2. This will load *JetForm Filler* and display the form ready for completion or amendment.

4.3. Auditors using the Software

4.3.1. There are two methods of loading a form for auditors, depending on whether or not the audit version has been created. Paragraph 4.3.2. deals with creating the audit version and paragraph 4.3.3 deals with a previously created audit version.

4.3.2. Creating the Audit Version

- double click on the icon created to open the menu window (see figure 4.2);
- insert the disk supplied by the local authority containing the pre audit form into the A Drive;
- press the Audit Claim button on the menu window; and
- insert the DETR disk (audit version disk) into the A: drive when prompted then click OK.

Figure 4.2 - Auditor Menu



4.3.3. Amending a previously saved audit version:

- open the menu window (see figure 4.2 above);
- insert the disk containing the previously saved audit version of the form into the A Drive;
- press the Audit Claim button on the menu window; and
- you will be asked to confirm if you wish to amend previously audited data; if so click on OK.

4.3.4. This will invoke *JetForm Filler* and display the form ready for completion or amendment.

5. The JetForm Software - Features of the Form

5.1. The Software used by local authorities and auditors to view and amend the form is *Jetform Filler*. Pressing the 'Complete Claim', 'Audit Claim' or 'Certify Disk' buttons in the Housing Grant Claim menu window will load Jetform. This chapter explains the main features of Jetform which you may use. In particular it explains how to move around the form and operation of the buttons in the JetForm tool-bar see figure 5.1. and Alignment of a Form on Screen

Figure 5.1 - The JetForm Header



5.2. Size and Alignment of a Form on Screen

5.2.1. The form will be displayed within a window titled "*JetForm Filler- ...*". You may find the form easier to use if you enlarge this window to full size. To do this, click on the maximise square on the top right-hand corner of the window.

5.2.2. You can alter the **size** of the form display by selecting View from the menu bar and then selecting Zoom from the drop down list.

5.2.3. The size of the form display can also be:

- reduced by clicking the right-hand button of your mouse once or as many times as required;
- enlarged by holding down the Ctrl key and pressing the 9 key once, or as many times as required; or
- reduced by holding down the Ctrl key and pressing the 8 key once, or as many times as required.

5.2.4. If the form is **misaligned** within the window, you can:

- align it to the left, by using your mouse to move the button on the horizontal scroll bar to the left-hand side of the bar (the horizontal scroll bar is located at the bottom of the window); and
- align it to top, by using your mouse to move the button on the vertical scroll bar to the top of the bar (the vertical scroll bar is located at the right-hand side of the window).

5.3. JetForm Filler Button Bar

-  Pressing the **Exit Button** will close JetForm Filler and return to the Housing Grant Claim menu window. You will be prompted to save any changes made since the form was last saved.
-  Pressing the **Save Button** will save the form with the current entries but will not exit from JetForm Filler.
-  Pressing the **Print Button** will invoke the JetForm print window. You have options to print either the whole form or the current page. The printer used will be the default printer set up in Windows. The JetForm Filler software does not allow for a selection of pages to be printed.
-  Pressing the **Recalc All Button** causes JetForm Filler to carry out all calculations in the form sequentially. **To ensure that all fields in a form have been calculated correctly you must use this function before saving and exiting from a form.**
-  Pressing the **Add Note Button** adds a JetNote to the face of the form. (See paragraph 6.9 on the use of JetNotes).
-  Pressing the **Delete Note Button** deletes the highlighted JetNote from the of Pressing the Delete Note Button deletes the highlighted JetNote from the form. (See paragraph 6.9 on the use of JetNotes).
-  Pressing the **Previous Page Button** moves cursor back a page . But any compulsory fields (i.e. a field requiring data to be entered) on the current page must be completed before the current page can be closed, and any field containing a field entry validation error must be corrected.
-  Pressing the **Goto Page Button** brings up a menu box which allows the user to select any page as a destination. The function moves the cursor to the selected page. But any compulsory fields (i.e. a field requiring data to be entered) on the current page must be completed before the current page can be closed, and any field containing a field entry validation error must be corrected.
-  Pressing the **Next Page Button** closes the current page and opens the next page. But any compulsory fields on the current page (i.e. a field requiring data to be entered) must be completed before the current page can be closed, and any field containing a field entry validation error must be corrected.

6. Making Entries in the Claim Form

6.1. This chapter explains how to make (or amend) entries on a claim form.

Figure 6.1 - Extract from a claim form

6.2. Set out above is an extract from a typical form. It shows:

- the header line which describes the form and shows the filename.
- the JetForm function buttons are described in paragraph 5.3.
- the details of the form contents are described in the rest of chapter 6.

6.3. Field Colours

6.3.1. There are four types of data fields used on forms and they can be distinguished by their **colours**:

- yellow with black text - data can be entered;
- green with black text - current field selected in which data can be entered;
- white with blue text - the entry has been pre-filled but can be overridden if required; and
- white with red text - data entry is prevented either due to a calculation or because the field has been pre-filled.

6.3.2. When you have loaded a form you **can change the field colours as follows**:

- select Options from the menu bar, then view from the drop down list and click on the item field colours;
- click in the appropriate button by the side of the text or background you wish to change;
- click on the colours button then select the required colour and click on OK;
- when you have made all the required changes click on the OK button to save the changes or the Cancel button to discard the changes.

6.3.3. There are also **Help fields**, these appear in the form of buttons either situated at the top of a page, section of a page or alongside data fields.

6.4. Moving Around the Form

6.4.1. When the form is displayed initially after loading, or when you move into a new page, the cursor will default to the first field on the page which will usually be the Contacts Help Button.

6.4.2. To move off the Help button and forward through the form you can click on another field or button using the **mouse** or by pressing the **Tab** key.

6.4.3. To **move backward** through the form, you can click on another field or button using the mouse or by holding down the Shift key and pressing the Tab key.

6.4.4. You can only click into data fields in which entries can be made, when you click in the field, the field will change colour (see paragraph 6.3.1 for field colours).

6.4.5. You can **move between pages** on the form by scrolling through the form or in the

following ways:

- to move one page at a time press the Next Page or Previous Page buttons on the button bar (see paragraph 5.3); or
- to move several pages in either direction then press the Goto button on the button bar and select the page number from the list which appears (see paragraph 5.3).

6.4.6. As you tab through the form you will notice that the white coloured fields are skipped. This is because these fields contain calculations or protected values where data entry is not allowed.

6.5. The end of the form

6.5.1. When you reach the end of the form (i.e. when you attempt to continue past the last enterable field on the last page), if you have followed the instructions correctly (see paragraph 3.4), the form will automatically return to the first page. Otherwise, the form will display the message "*This is the last field on this record. OK to proceed with the next record?*". You must select the No option on this message. If you select the Yes option, you will be presented with a blank Page 1 of the form which will represent a second record of the same form. Any entries made in this second record will be ignored by the Department.

6.5.2. If you think you may have accidentally entered into a new record, look at the bottom right hand corner of the screen in the status bar. If the end of the title reads "... [rec#2/2]-Page .." (instead of "... [rec#1/1]-Page ..") you are in the second record. To return to the first record select Edit from the menu bar select Go to, and then Previous Record from the drop down list. Select 1 from the pick list displayed. This will return you to page 1 of the first record.

6.6. Field Help Buttons on the Form

6.6.1. **Help Buttons** at the top of each page or section of a page contain contacts and general help for that page or section of a page. Help Buttons alongside a field contain information specific to that field. Buttons on the Form

6.6.2. Use the **vertical scroll** bar on the right-hand side of the Help window to scroll through the notes in full.

6.6.3. To close the Help window, click on the OK button on the window with the mouse (or press the Return key, or the Space Bar). Click on the field that you want to go to with the mouse or press the Tab key to move into the next field on the page.

6.7. Entering Data Or Amending

6.7.1. To enter data in a field, first select the field by clicking on it with the mouse or tabbing into it and then type the entry.

6.7.2. Field entries can be amended by selecting the field and then:

- highlighting the entry by dragging the mouse across it and then typing the new entry;

or

- pressing the Backspace key; this will delete the value, one character at a time, from the left;

or

- using the left and right arrow keys with the Backspace and Delete keys. Pressing the Delete key will delete the character to the right of the cursor. Pressing the Backspace key will delete the character to the left of the cursor.

6.8. Validation of Entries

6.8.1. The entry made in a field will be validated when you attempt to move to the next field. This means that the Software checks that the entry is within certain parameters. For example, most of the fields on the form will be set to numeric format. This means that the entries in these fields must be numeric and not text. If you attempt to enter text in a numeric field, the form will display the message '*Invalid data for numeric field*'. To correct the entry, press the Continue button on the message and amend the entry to a numeric value.

6.8.2. In other cases, fields may contain rules to ensure that the entries fall within set criteria. An example of such a rule would be one that restricts the entry to 1 or 0. An entry of 2 in a field containing such a rule would cause the form to display the message '*Entry must be 1 or 0*'. To correct the entry, press the Continue button on the message and amend the entry to 1 or 0.

6.9. JetNotes

6.9.1. JetNotes are the electronic equivalent of pencil notes in the margin and can be used, for example, to keep a note of where data has been obtained from. The contents of JetNotes do not print when the form is printed. JetNotes should never be used to convey a message to the Department as the Department does not open them. If you need to explain an entry on a form to the Department, the explanation should be set out in a letter accompanying the form.

6.9.2. To **add a JetNote**, press the Add Note button on the Button bar A box will open on the screen (usually in the top left corner). After typing in the required note you should click on the arrow in the top right corner of the box to minimise the note. The JetNote can be dragged to the required position by clicking and holding the left mouse button on the minimised JetNote or on the shaded bar of the maximised JetNote.

6.9.3. To **remove a JetNote** you should click on the JetNote then press the Delete button on

the Button bar The Delete button will be greyed unless a JetNote is selected.

6.10. Printing the Form

6.10.1. You may print the form at any time, using *JetForm Filler*.

6.10.2. To do this:

- press the Print button on the *JetForm Filler* button bar;

or

- select File from the *JetForm Filler* menu bar and then Print from the drop down list.

6.10.3. Both these options will invoke a print dialogue window which allows you to print the entire form or just the current page.

6.11. Saving the Form

6.11.1. To save the form, press the Recalc All button on the button bar this will ensure that all calculations throughout the form have been carried out correctly, then either,

- press the Save button on the button bar;

or

- select File from the menu bar and then select Save from the drop down list.

6.11.2. Either of these options will save the entries or changes that you have made on the form to the C drive. To save the data to the disk in the A: drive you must either Certify the Disk or exit from the Menu Window.

6.12. The file name

6.12.1. When saving your work, please do not attempt to re-name the file. The name of the file containing the entries you have made on the form is very important. If the file has the wrong name, the entire form will be rejected when it reaches the Department.

6.12.2. The name of the file containing your work is displayed on the JetForm window title bar.

The name is made up of the following components:

- your local authority number; and
- the form reference; and
- the data file extension (i.e. DAT)

6.13. Exiting the Form the Form

6.13.1. To exit the Form:

- press the Exit button on the button bar;

or

- select File from the main menu and then select Exit from the drop down list.

7. Certification of the form

7.1. All Electronic Claim Forms must be certified electronically before they are returned to the Department. Whenever an entry is changed on the form or a new entry is made, the form must be re-certified before it is returned to the Department. If this is not done, the Certification Number will be incorrect and the form will be rejected when it reaches the Department. The Department will not treat a form as being properly completed and returned until it has been certified correctly.

7.2. You must certify the form electronically when you have completed your work. Should you fail to do this, the entire form will be rejected when it reaches the Department.

7.3. There is no limit to the number of times that you can certify the form electronically. The only conditions are that:

- the Certification Number displayed in the last field on the last page of the form must have been generated after the last entry or amendment was made, recalculation has been performed and the form has been saved; and
- the Certification Number printed on the Certificate (which must be printed and signed by your Chief Finance Officer (or auditor for Audit forms), and sent to the Department with the disk) must be exactly the same as the number on the form.

7.4. Ensuring that the certification number is correct is one of the Department's main security controls on electronic claim forms and the Department therefore will check that it is correct. It does this by checking that the numbers on the paper certificate and electronic form coincide and by generating the number on the electronic form from the data on the form. This means

that if you amend an entry or make a new entry after the form has been certified, the certification number generated by the Department will be different from that in the form. The form will be returned to you and you will be asked to investigate the certification failure and to re-certify and re-submit the form. This may cause a delay or suspension of payments (**endnote - 4**).

7.5. How to Certify a Form

7.5.1. To certify the form:

- exit JetForm;

or

- if you are not in JetForm, insert the disk containing the form into the A Drive;
- press the Certify button on the menu window titled Housing Grant Claim. After a few seconds, the message "Claim certified and saved" should be displayed. To continue, press the OK button on the message. This will invoke JetForm automatically and display the certified form. You can now either exit JetForm, view or print the form. But if you make any changes to the entries on the form or make any new entries on the form you must re-certify it before returning the disk to the Department or taking a copy for your Auditor.

8. Copying the Form

8.1. There are three main reasons why you need to copy the form:

- to keep an up to date copy of your work should the main file become corrupted or lost;
- to create a copy of a certified pre-audit disk to send to your auditor;
- to keep a copy of the certified disk for your own records, as required by the Administration Determination for Housing Revenue Account Subsidy (**endnote - 5**).

8.2. To copy the form from one floppy disk onto another disk:

- insert the disk containing the form (called the source disk) into the A Drive;
- if data has been entered or changed during the current session then to copy the latest version of the data from the C drive you must either:

Certify the Claim

or;

- Exit from the menu window, this copies the latest version from the C drive then restart the menu window;
- press the Copy Disk button in the Housing Grant Claim menu window;
- after a few seconds the message "Please insert the destination disk" will be displayed;
- when this message is displayed, remove the source disk from the A Drive and replace it with a formatted blank disk (called the destination disk). This disk must be formatted and contain no other data;
- press the OK button on the message;
- after a short while the message "Disk copy completed" will be displayed; and
- press the OK button on this message and remove the disk from the A Drive.

8.3. If you copy files between disks using Windows Explorer or a similar product then you should take great care to ensure that the disk only contains files relating to one form and that the latest data file is the one being copied.

8.4. When copying the Advance Final form onto another disk for use by an auditor, please label the destination disk so that it reflects the information printed on the source disk i.e. so that it shows the form reference and your local authority's number and name.

9. Installation of Upgrades

9.1 To date one upgrade has been issued to the LASS2 software in February 2000. The instructions for loading it are as follows.

LASS Version 2.0 (Upgrade 1)

- Log into your PC as administrator (you may need to speak to your IT section for this high-level access).
- Insert the disk labelled LASS Version 2.0 (Upgrade 1) into the floppy drive.
- Click on Settings.
- Click on Start.
- Double click on Control Panel.
- Double click on Add/Remove Programs.
- Click on the Install... button.
- Click on the Next button.
- A:\SETUP.EXE should appear in the command line box, if not please type it in.
- Click on Finish button.
- The installation takes approximately 30 seconds and will return you to the Windows Desktop.
- Log out of administrator.
- Log in as an ordinary user.
- Open the LASS software.
- Load a claim disk into the floppy drive and copy it.

Appendix B

LAH Forms Helpdesk

For Help with technical problems involving the software then please contact one of the following:

Alistair Mann
0207 944 3602
alistair.mann@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Noor Taha
0207 944 3577
noor.taha@communities.gsi.gov.uk

for assistance regarding the entries to be made in a particular field on a form then you should contact the Officer listed in the Contacts Button on the form.

Endnotes

1. The most recent Administration Determination is the General Determination of Administration of Housing Revenue Account Subsidy (No. 2) 1997 issued on 22 December 1997 and the provision requiring claim forms to be submitted electronically is at paragraph 4.2.
2. Local authorities who have closed their Housing Revenue Accounts will not be sent, and should not complete, either the Pre-Audit (or Advance) Base Data Return or Audit Base Data Return.
3. Where any of these dates fall on a weekend or bank holiday, the form must be returned on the last working day before the weekend or bank holiday.
4. The most recent Administration Determination is the General Determination of Administration of Housing Revenue Account Subsidy (No. 2) 1997 issued on 22 December 1997 and the provision covering delay or suspension of payments is at paragraph 6.2.
5. The most recent Administration Determination is the General Determination of Administration of Housing Revenue Account Subsidy (No. 2) 1997 issued on 22 December 1997 and the provision requiring copies of claim forms to be retained is at paragraph 4.6.

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