



AEA

Recommended Best Practices for Avionics Shops – Filing Warranty Claims

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With a charter to improve the relationship between avionics shops and avionics manufacturers, the AEA has developed this “best practices” guide for filing warranty claims. The goal of the “best practices” is to help avionics shops understand the appropriate processes and considerations which need to be taken into account to ensure consistent and fair coverage and/or reimbursement.

NOTICE

These guidelines do not replace or supersede any manufacturer’s published warranty policy.

Each manufacturer has a warranty policy and procedures. These policies are published and updated as required. It is imperative that avionics shop personnel are familiar with the benefits and requirements these policies define. Failure to understand and comply with a manufacturer’s policy could put the shop at risk of not having a unit repaired under warranty or a labor claim paid.

Product Registration

One problem manufacturers see with many warranty claims is making a determination as to whether or not the equipment is under warranty coverage. It is the dealer’s responsibility to submit warranty registration to initiate the end users applicable warranty period. It is the dealer’s responsibility to notify the avionics manufacturer of any equipment installed and removed.

Manufacturer’s may require the equipment to be registered at the initial point of install and if not, may not honor the product warranty. If the previous step was not done, then be prepared to have the customer provide the logbooks and/or other paperwork (invoice) that would substantiate the install date and start of the warranty period. If it is not possible to establish the warranty start date from these sources, try contacting the equipment manufacturer to see if they have any records. Regardless of how the warranty start date is determined, submit a copy of the supporting document with each warranty claim. With the substantiating data, verification can be made more quickly. Without it, there is the risk that the claim could be rejected.

“What am I buying?”

To a manufacturer, they are purchasing a service in the form of warranty labor/services, and have the right to know what they are being asked to pay for.

Labor Reimbursement

Too often, warranty claim forms and/or work orders do not carry enough detail to justify the amount of time spent working on an issue. To help ensure that the manufacturer does not reject your claim, make sure to include details on what work you did and the breakdown of time on each item.

Never submit a claim with “INOP” or similar brief wording being provided as the description of the fault. For warranty claims, less is not always more when it comes to the details on the work performed. This does not ensure that your claim will be paid in full. However, it will help in justifying the claim. Reimbursement will be based on established labor hours as defined in the applicable warranty policy.

Use All Available Resources and Communicate Effectively

Another common complaint from manufacturers is shops working on warranty issues fail to use the resources available to them. Manufacturers can frequently point to warranty claims where the shop failed to follow the available troubleshooting materials/steps and/or did not pick up the phone to call for help until they were already multiple hours into the project without resolving the problem.

To help avoid issues when the warranty claim is filed, follow this helpful advice:

1. Follow the manufacturer's troubleshooting steps and in the proper sequence. Ensuring you systematically follow each step will ensure you do not miss a key step in the process. Record all information that is required as part of the process. If the manufacturer does not have a troubleshooting checklist, consider making your own; especially for issues around autopilots or other equipment where the basics are the same, regardless of make and model. Provide a copy to the manufacturer when submitting the claim to show your due diligence in troubleshooting the discrepancy.
2. If you cannot get the problem solved within the manufacturer's allowed time frame, call the manufacturer's support representative(s) for help. They may know exactly what the root cause is and can save you hours of time.
3. When you call the manufacturer for help, be sure to have full details of the aircraft configuration. Some issues that appear on one product may be caused by another that is installed in the aircraft. Without a full picture of the aircraft configuration, you could be handicapping both yourself and the manufacturer's ability to effectively troubleshoot the problem.
4. If you need more time than the manufacturer allows, ask in advance for approval for additional time and get it in writing. Request a copy of the authorization and request a copy be sent to the warranty administrator as well. Attach a copy of the additional time approval with the warranty claim to expedite processing of the claim.
5. When you have a warranty claim discrepancy with the manufacturer, be proactive in working to find a resolution. Use the opportunity to strengthen the business relationship by expressing your concerns and complaints professionally. Never throw anyone under the bus...not the customer or the manufacturer. Stay calm and patient and work through the issue until there is an acceptable solution.
6. Use digital photos to document findings where possible.
7. Submit warranty claims in a timely manner, but not to exceed 30 days from completion of work. The older the item, the harder they are to resolve as memories fade quickly, both at the dealer and manufacturer level.

Communications with the Customer

Warranty programs and policies vary significantly from one manufacturer to another. The most important initial action is ensuring you set the right expectation with your customer. Here are some tips to follow:

1. Make sure you understand the manufacturer's warranty policy completely. If you do not know, never guess. Tell the customer you do not know, but will get the information and respond.
2. Make sure your staff understands the manufacturer's warranty policy as well so no commitments are made that conflict with the manufacturer's policies.
3. From first contact, be very clear with the customer on the manufacturer's warranty policy regarding what will or will not be covered. Get concurrence from the customer on payment responsibilities for any uncovered charges prior to any work. Never surprise your customer with the bill.
4. Always have the customer sign off on the work order before starting. This gives you a backup in case there is a conflict once the work is completed.
5. If the project experiences additional issues and you feel the labor bill will exceed the original quote, inform the customer and make sure that you have their approval in writing.

Resources

AEA Warranty Claim Form: <http://www.aea.net/warranty>

Log onto the AEA website for the electronic version of the AEA's warranty claim form and links to manufacturer web-based warranty claim forms. A copy of this Best Practices Guide can also be found in this location.