

Accounting String Updates Coming Soon

In late May 2020, eRETA will be updated to automatically remove non-ASCII characters (e.g. ¶, π, →, ·, €) and hidden characters (e.g. the tab character that exists when copying two or more consecutive Excel cells) from the Agency Accounting Data field. Previously when users entered or copy and pasted non-ASCII characters and hidden characters into the Agency Accounting Data field, the data flowing downstream to Treasury's IPAC system caused significant billing issues. When the new enhancement goes into effect, eRETA will automatically remove these characters and replace them with a single space instead, significantly mitigating downstream billing impacts.

What will happen if I enter non-ASCII characters (e.g. ¶, π, →, ·, €) into the Agency Accounting Data field?

When the new enhancement goes live in late May 2020, non-ASCII characters in the Agency Accounting Data field will be automatically removed and replaced with a space. For example, if an eRETA user tried entering or copying and pasting "20-ABC-DX9-E6πZ" into the Agency Accounting Data field, eRETA would remove the non-ASCII character listed (π) and replace with an empty space, so the result would read as follows: "20-ABC-DX9-E6 Z".

The screenshot below follows the same example. The user tried to copy and paste "20-ABC-DX9-E6πZ" into the Agency Accounting Data field, but eRETA stripped the non-ASCII character and replaced it with an empty space instead. The arrow shows where the space was added in place of the non-ASCII character.

The screenshot shows the eRETA interface for "Agency Accounting Details". The top navigation bar includes "SEARCH", "DATA ENTRY", "FINANCIAL REVIEW", "DOCUMENTATION", and "ESTIMATES". The left sidebar contains menu items: "CUSTOMER INFORMATION", "BILLING INFORMATION", "ACCOUNTING DETAILS", "CUSTOMER APPROVAL", "PBS INFORMATION", "AUTHORIZING DETAILS", and "PBS APPROVAL". The main content area displays "Agency Accounting Details" for "WR/RWA Number: W1797118", "Status: Planning/Estimate", and "Input Code: A". A "Read-Only View" link is present. A "Required Fields" indicator is shown. The "Add Agency Accounting Detail Line" form includes fields for "Agency Certified Amt \$0.00", "Agency Fund Year 2020", "Fund Type A: Annual", "Expiration Date of Obligational Authority 09/30/2020", "Authorized Line Amt \$ 100,000.00", and "Treasury Symbol 010202020 0100000". The "Agency Accounting Data" field contains the text "20-ABC-DX9-E6 Z", with a red arrow pointing to the space between "E6" and "Z". Below the field is the text "(Limited to 255 Characters)". "Save", "Cancel", and "Reset" buttons are at the bottom right.

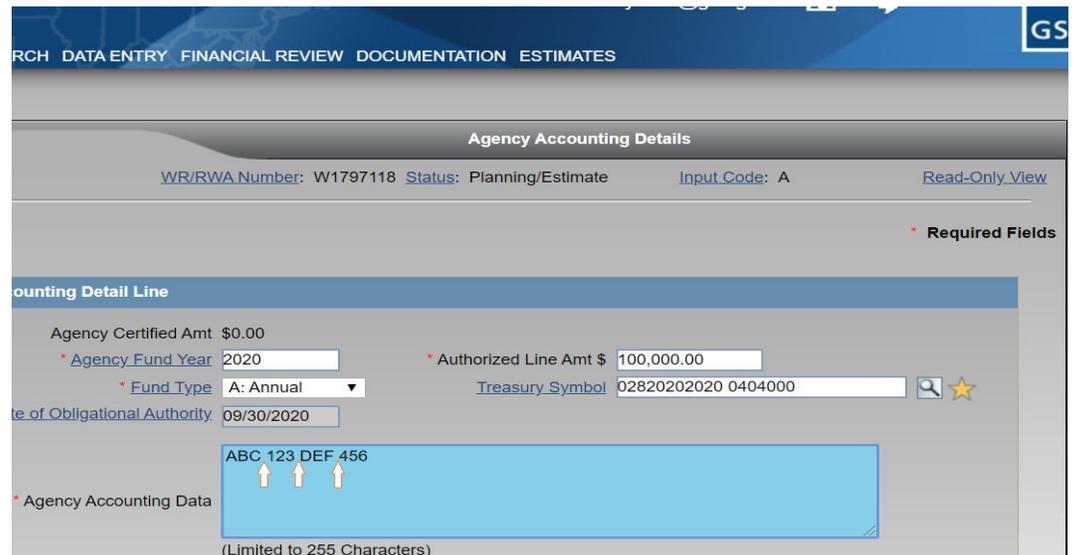
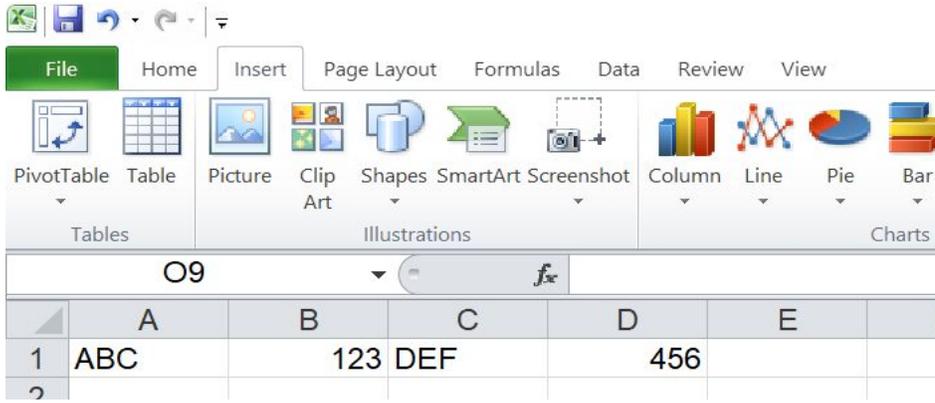
System will automatically remove non-ASCII characters and replace them with an empty space.

Note 1: If you insert more than one non-ASCII character next to each other, eRETA will not add a space in place of each non-ASCII character. Instead it will insert just one space in place of the continuous string of non-ASCII characters. For example, if you tried to copy paste "ABCΣπ→123" into the Agency Accounting Data field, there are three consecutive non-ASCII characters next to each other, so the resulting output would have just one space: "ABC 123".

What if I copy and paste data from Excel into the Agency Accounting Data field?

There is a hidden data element between Excel cells, meaning when users copy data spanning more than one Excel cell, each cell separation results in the addition of a hidden character. When this enhancement goes into effect, eRETA will remove the hidden character and insert a space between any characters that were previously separated by a cell in Excel.

The example below shows data copied from Excel into eRETA. As described, eRETA inserts an empty space wherever there is a cell separation in Excel.



If copying and pasting from Excel, eRETA will insert a space between characters separated by an Excel cell.

Note 2: Following the note on the previous page, any continuous string of hidden characters and non-ASCII characters results in the removal of all those elements and replaced with just one space in eRETA. For example, following the screenshots on this page, if cell C1 instead contained "DEFπ", the output in the Agency Accounting Data field would have the same result as the eRETA screenshot shown above: "ABC 123 DEF 456". This is because the cell separation and the non-ASCII character are next to each other, meaning only one space is inserted in place of the continuous string of non-ASCII characters and hidden characters.

Why does this matter?

Non-ASCII characters (e.g. ¶, π, →, ·, €) and hidden characters (e.g. those between Excel cells) cause billing issues downstream with Treasury's IPAC system, often resulting in customer chargebacks due to mismatches in billing. This enhancement will mitigate downstream billing issues by preventing such mismatches. However it is important that customers are aware of these enhancements since the information entered into eRETA - and in some cases auto-corrected by eRETA - is what they will see on their billing statements.

BONUS KNOWLEDGE: Training, training and more training!

Visit www.gsa.gov/ereta where you'll find a wealth of training materials including user guides, Quick Tips (like this one), and more. Also we offer one live virtual training session per month, featuring highlights from past eRETA Overview and Advanced sessions. These trainings are held through GSA's Client Enrichment Series and you can register by visiting www.gsa.gov/ces or by clicking the links below!

- **eRETA Digest - Live Virtual Training Session**
 - [May 12: 1-2:30pm \(eastern\)](#)
 - [June 9: 1-2:30pm \(eastern\)](#)