

Re: Switches/field codes to fix zip code in merge

Source:

<http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Word/microsoft.public.word.mailmerge.fields/2007-12/msg00283.html>

- *From:* "Peter Jamieson" <pjj@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 29 Dec 2007 16:21:33 -0000
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How can something so seemingly simple be so difficult to fix?!

I certainly wish it were simpler, but the "how" boils down to "different software has different target groups, has been designed and implemented by different people at different times, sometimes with no good standards to work to"

I've posted a shortened version of this message in reply to your most recent posts...

However, you may find the following helpful (and Graham – if you think it is worth incorporating any of this in your web pages, please do so: I'll probably also put it into my t0003 page about Excel-related problems. However, the following results from a fairly quick look, not years of experience)

Generally speaking, switching to the DDE approach that Graham has mentioned will sort out a lot of problems using Excel data sources. It doesn't work in all cases (e.g. if you do not actually have Excel on your system, the data is not in the first sheet of the workbook, or you need to use "unusual" Unicode characters) but in many cases there is a simple way of dealing with that (e.g. if the sheet isn't the first in the book, copy the workbook and delete all the sheets before the one you want).

1. In Excel, you can enter, store and format, ZIP codes in a number of different ways, including:

a. If you enter 5-digit ZIPs by entering the 5 digits, Excel will save the data as a number with "General" formatting and display the number, right justified, with no leading zeroes. If it is possible to have ZIP codes with leading zeroes, you can ensure that you always see all 5 digits by applying the ZIP format, which is a numeric format: 00000.

b. If you enter 9-digit ZIPs by entering the 9 digits without the hyphen, Excel will save the data as a number with "General" formatting and display the number, left justified, with no leading zeroes. If you want to display them with the hyphen, you can apply the ZIP+4 format which is a numeric format: 00000\–0000 (i.e. applying the format does not change the stored number into text)

c. If you enter 9-digit ZIPs by entering 5 digits, a hyphen, then 4 digits, Excel will save the data as text with "General" formatting and display what you entered, right justified.

d. If you format your cells as text, what happens depends on when and how you do it:

- i) Once you have entered a number in a cell that is not formatted as text, Excel stores it as a number, even if you apply Text formatting to the cell.
- ii) If you format a cell as text, /then/ enter a number, Excel stores the number as text (actually, I am by no

Re: Switches/field codes to fix zip code in merge

- means sure that this is always the case). But it also flags a warning using one of its red(?) corner markers.
- iii) If you already have numbers in cells in a column and you want to turn them into text format, you can do it, but not by applying text formatting – you can
- select the column
 - select the Data|Text to Columns... menu option
 - click Next through the wizard until you reach Step 3 of 3, then select Text as the Column Data Format.

As you can imagine, it is not all that easy to tell the difference between the different things merely by looking at them. Typically, the 9–digit number in (b) will be right–aligned even when it is displayed with the "-", and the text in (c) will be left–aligned, as long as you have not explicitly aligned the result.

Also, applying either of the ZIP or ZIP+4 formats to the entire column is not much help because

- e. if you apply the ZIP format to 9–digit ZIPs, you just see a 9–digit number with no hyphen
- f. if you apply the ZIP+4 format to 5–digit ZIPs, the ZIP12345 will appear as 00001–2345. Pretty useless, in fact.

2. When Word gets the data from Excel,

- a. DDE will retrieve the data /as you see it/ It doesn't matter whether you see 12345–6789 because you entered 12345–6789 (as in (c) or applied a ZIP+4 format to 123456789 (as in (b)).
- b. the default method Word 2002 and later use to get data from Excel (an "OLE DB provider") gets the data /as it is stored/, but with a twist. i.e., if you entered 123456789, Word will retrieve 123456789 whether or not it is formatted as a ZIP+4. If you entered 12345–6789, Word will retrieve "12345–6789".

The twist is that when it gets the data, the OLE DB provider tries to assign a data type to the entire column. In other words, it sees the whole column as numeric, or as text. Roughly speaking,

- c. if you entered all your ZIPs as numbers and applied ZIP and ZIP+4 formatting, the provider will decide that the column is numeric
- d. if all your ZIPs are 9–digit ZIPs that you entered as per 1(c), the provider will decide that the column is text
- e. if there is a mix of types 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c), the provider will decide on the contents of the first 8 cells in the ZIP code column. If they are /all/ numbers (types 1(a) and 1(b), the provider will decide that the whole column is numeric. If /any/ of them are texts, the provider will decide that the whole column is text.

Then the provider has to decide what to do about numeric values in a text column, and text values in a numeric column

- f. If the provider decides that the column is numeric, and there are no type 1(c) ZIPs, then we are OK in the sense that all the ZIP data gets through to Word as 5– or 9–digit numbers
- g. If the provider decides that the column is text, we are OK because the provider then appears to use the display text for all the cells. As long as they all look like 5 or 9–digit ZIPs, that's what Word will see
- i. However, if the provider decides that the column is numeric, any 1(c) type ZIPs will be lost as they are passed to Word as the numeric value 0.

3. If you got this far, it is perhaps worth asking

- a. How could we avoid situation 2(i)?
- b. If we manage to avoid situation 2(i), how can we display all the ZIP codes in Word correctly?

4. I /think/ you can fix 3(b) using the fields I suggested elsewhere, i.e.

```
{ IF { QUOTE "{ MERGEFIELD zip }99999" \#0 } < 0
"{ MERGEFIELD zip }"
"{ IF { MERGEFIELD ZIP } > 99999
"{ MERGEFIELD ZIP \#"00000'-'0000" }"
```

Re: Switches/field codes to fix zip code in merge

"{ MERGEFIELD ZIP \# "00000" }" }" }

There could well be a simpler formulation but at the moment I am only trying to think of /a/ way to do it.

5. As for 3(a), it might be better to ask an Excel expert (although I am not convinced that they have to cope with this either unless they want to use their data in a merge). A lot depends on how you are acquiring your data (is it in spreadsheets prepared elsewhere, or by you?), whether you prefer trying to attain consistency during data entry or whether you prefer to post-process any column that contains ZIPs, and whether you prefer enforcement (which probably requires a lot of code that you could do without) or encouragement to conform to standards.

Because of the problem that the OLE DB provider can have with mixed data types, I think that any solution should aim to end up with an Excel ZIP column having either /all numeric/ ZIPs or /all text/ ZIPs. Once the data has been entered and there is potentially a mix of numeric and text data, I think the only way to achieve this is to use approach 1(d)iii above – i.e. change the entire column to text. 5–digit numeric ZIPs will become 5–digit texts, 9–digit numeric ZIPs formatted as ZIP+4 will become 9–digit texts, and 5–4 text ZIPs will remain as 5–4 texts. You would need the complex Word field code in (4) to deal with that column correctly.

If you prefer to stick to numeric codes, a good approach might be to try to encourage people to enter 5 digits or 9 digits and avoid entering 5–4 texts. There are a couple of ways you could consider doing that, e.g.

a. Select the ZIP column, go to Format|Cells|Number, select Custom, and enter something like the following (or select it if it is already there):

[<100000]00000;[>99999]00000–0000;[Red]"wrong" @

b. Format the column header as General or Text

Numeric 5 and 9–digit ZIP codes should appear correctly, and any Text ZIPs should appear in Red with "wrong " in front. Or...

c. use Excel conditional formatting (which lets you apply colour etc. to the cell).

Or I suppose you could decide to enter all ZIPs in two columns – 5 digits in the first, and 4 digits in the second, blank if it's a 5–digit zip. Then piece the ZIP code back together in Word, e.g.

{ MERGEFIELD zip5 \#00000 } { MERGEFIELD zip4 \#"-'0000" }

And so on...

—

Peter Jamieson

<http://tips.pjmsn.me.uk>

"MrsMac" <MrsMac@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:F6C113A9-1F23-44A1-8C6B-9FA6368389C2@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Thanks — it worked, sort of. I get five–digit zips instead of four–digit ones. But it doesn't merge the nine–digit ones. I get five zeros instead. Is this because I have the field formatted as Zip Code instead of Zip Code + Four? When I change the format to Zip + Four, all my five–digit zips turn into five zeroes, a hyphen, then FOUR numbers of the five–digit zip code. My database is over 5000 entries — too many to go through and change it all by hand — there's got to be a better way!

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"Peter Jamieson" wrote:

This

```
{ IF {MERGEFIELD ZIP } > 99999" { MERGEFIELD ZIP \#  
"00000'-0000" }" "{  
MERGEFIELD ZIP \# "00000" }" }
```

should be more like this

```
{ IF {MERGEFIELD ZIP } > 99999 "{ MERGEFIELD ZIP \#  
"00000'-0000" }" "{  
MERGEFIELD ZIP \# "00000" }" }
```

Everything else looks OK to me (as long as /all/ the { } are the sort you enter with ctrl-F9)) although I would probably lay it out either as

```
{ IF { MERGEFIELD ZIP } > 99999 "{ MERGEFIELD ZIP  
\#"00000'-0000" }" "{  
MERGEFIELD ZIP \# "00000" }" }
```

or

```
{ IF { MERGEFIELD ZIP } > 99999 "{ MERGEFIELD ZIP \#  
"00000'-0000" }" "{  
MERGEFIELD ZIP \# "00000" }" }
```

primarily because Word itself usually has space after { and before }

—

Peter Jamieson

<http://tips.pjmsn.me.uk>

"MrsMac" <MrsMac@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:B40B5C74-1E32-4DE0-9F43-03F1CC219D16@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

> Office 2003

> I've been reading a lot on Graham's site about fixing zip codes, but > using
> switches and field codes is all new to me and I can't figure it out. I

> keep

> getting the error message "Error! Missing test condition" when I toggle
> back.

> I'm trying to get an Excel list that has 5-digit zips and 9-digit zips > to
> print out properly in a label merge. Here's what I have for the last > line
> of

> merge fields:

>

```
> { MERGEFIELD CITY }, {MERGEFIELD STATE } { IF  
{MERGEFIELD ZIP } >> 99999" {
```

```
> MERGEFIELD ZIP \# "00000'-0000" }" "{ MERGEFIELD ZIP \#
```

Re: Switches/field codes to fix zip code in merge

"00000" }"}

>

> I'm using Ctrl F9 for the brackets, I've entered the above from > Graham's
> site, but am not sure about spacing, etc.

>

> Thanks for any help — Mrs mac

>