



Missouri Self Storage Monitor

The MSSOA Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2020

PO Box 105920 | Jefferson City, MO 65110 | 573-480-0454 | www.mssoa.org



A Reminder About the Protections Available Under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act

By Scott Zucker, Esq.

A recent case, [U.S. Department of Justice v. PR Taylor Enterprises, LLC](#), should act as a quick reminder to self-storage companies that they must recognize and defer to the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) before attempting to enforce their lien rights against their tenants for rent default.

Section 307 of the SCRA specifically addresses the enforcement of storage liens and provides as follows:

(a) LIENS-

- (1) LIMITATION ON FORECLOSURE OR ENFORCEMENT - A person holding a lien on the property or effects of a servicemember may not, during any period of military service of the servicemember and for 90 days thereafter, foreclose or enforce any lien on such property or effects without a court order granted before foreclosure or enforcement.
- (2) LIEN DEFINED - For the purposes of paragraph (1), the term 'lien' includes a lien for storage, repair, or cleaning of the property or effects of a servicemember or a lien on such property or effects for any other reason.


(b) STAY OF PROCEEDINGS - In a proceeding to foreclose or enforce a lien subject to this section, the court may on its own motion, and shall if requested by a servicemember whose ability to comply with the obligation resulting in the proceeding is materially affected by military service--

- (1) stay the proceeding for a period of time as justice and equity require; or
- (2) adjust the obligation to preserve the interests of all parties.

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MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Thanks to everyone who joined us for the Fall Conference and November Webinar. We had a great turnout for both. You can access these webinars at MSSOA.org/seminar-resources/



Membership Renewals will be mailed the first week in January. We will also send notifications via email with the link to pay online via MSSOA.org.

Did you know the MSSOA has updated the Model Rental Agreement? If you do not have this new sample lease, please go to our website and click Member Downloads or contact Shelly at sharris@mssoa.org

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear MSSOA Members,

As we work our way through the end of this year, I want to express my appreciation for members of our association. This year was full of unexpected challenges. I want to thank our Board of Directors for coming together and quickly making changes that were necessary to help our members navigate some of the changes to our industry; specifically for contactless rentals, lien sales and safety precautions at our facilities. We would not have asked for these changes, but we can look back and see that, as an association, communication and receptiveness provided some level of security to our members.

2020 brought two new insights to me about our association. First, Virtual Conferences are effective and bring necessary education and communication to our members. We will continue to have our spring and fall conferences, but we will also make webinars a priority. Second, MSSOA.org has proved to be a useful tool for keeping you up to date with the Model Rental Agreement and the other downloads available at MSSOA.org. The technology we implemented in 2019 and early this year really paid off.

Across the state, we have worked together for 21 years to make our businesses stronger, and in doing so, we have made the industry stronger in our state. If you are new to our association, we invite you to grow with us, lean on us for support, and take advantage of all the MSSOA has to offer. As we make plans for 2021, we would love to hear from you: How did the MSSOA make a difference in your business this year? What are your thoughts on the education we provided? How can we improve?

Make sure to take a look at the Membership News on the front page. We have big plans for next year, and we want to make great strides in keeping all of our members informed.

Have a safe and joyous holiday season,

Brian Wofford
President, MSSOA

We are happy to welcome these new members to the MSSOA Family.

American Self Storage
Steve Swaim, Lebanon

Sharp's Storage
Erica Sharp, Cottleville

United Storage
Matt Hall, Saint Paul

Smart Spot Storage
Tim Gardner, Osage Beach

SunWest Storage
Darin Haselhorst

Elkland E-Z Storage
Shelly Price

Mozark Storage
Michael Turner

4S Self Storage
Courtney Carlile

Highway 7 Storage
Steve Gannion, Clinton

Sequiota Real Estate
Andrew Grassi, Ozark

GOOD BETTER BEST

INTRODUCING TIERED VALUE PRICING

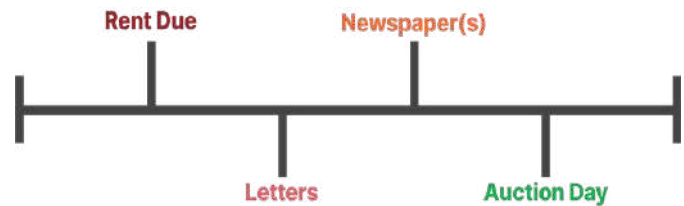
PRIORITIZE REVENUE GROWTH AND OPTIMIZATION THROUGH UNIT PRICING AND DEMAND, CAPTURE MORE TENANTS LOOKING TO RENT ONLINE, AND PROVIDE CHOICE AND AFFORDABILITY TO CREATE PURCHASING CONFIDENCE AND URGENCY.

TIMELINE GUARANTEE

What is the StorageAuctions.com Timeline Guarantee?

Our software will cross-check your auction information with your state's lien laws to ensure your auction stays in legal compliance.

- ✓ Entirely free - no fees attached
- ✓ Up to \$5,000 of legal protection
- ✓ **Industry's only digital auditing software**



"We love the Timeline Guarantee! This software helps our managers ensure they are always following the proper steps and timeframe for a legal auction in their state."

Another example of why we love StorageAuctions.com!"

-Anne Ballard



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SUPPORT TEAM



INFO@STORAGEAUCTIONS.COM
CONTACT US 24/7 BY EMAIL



SCHEDULE A DEMO
WALK THROUGH THE SITE
WITH AN EXPERT

StorageAuctions.com

New Timeline Guarantee

Since our very first auction we've always had one goal – give our customers our very best. This has led us to making sure that **Every** single **Unit** gets our best, **Every** single **Day**. To help ensure we continue giving our customers our very best we are always working on new features. Our latest feature added is the Timeline Guarantee.

One of the most frequent concerns we hear from self-storage owners and operators is making sure that they have followed their states lien laws as far as when they are sending letters, posting newspaper ads and sending a tenant to auction. The '[Timeline Guarantee](#)' helps storage facilities navigate the lien sale process and ensures that the appropriate steps and time frame have been followed in accordance to their state laws to have a legal auction.

What is this?

- This technology is built to ensure your auction follows your state's legally required timeframe. Our software will populate the necessary minimum timeframe for an auction in your state to help your facility stay in compliance with its auction timeframe.

How does it work?

- Simply opt-in to the service from your profile and any auction event you have will be cross checked with the requirements for your specific state laws
- Example – If your store is located in Georgia, when you create your auction event it will automatically populate the timeframe (date rent was first due and missed, demand letter date, newspaper ad dates) needed for you to follow Georgia's timeline for a legal auction. It will notify and deter you from having an auction too early and possible wrongful sale.

What does it cost?

- There is no additional cost for this service. We feel you deserve the best from your auctions partner and this software offering is a reflection of that

What if my portfolio is in several states?

- We use the physical address for that particular location having the auction and apply the state rules accordingly

Why is this important?

- To help prevent a wrongful sale due to insufficient timeline and avoid a potential lawsuit

Where can I sign up?

- The main account holder can sign up by selecting the checkbox under the "My Profile" section

How do I know it's working?

- If you are opted in and never notice it that's a great thing! That means your in compliance. But in the event there is ever an error, it is there to catch and notify you.

What happens if legal action is taken against my store for a wrongful sale?

- If you have opted in to this service and followed the timeline parameters installed by our system and legal action is taken against your store in the form of a wrongful sale claim due to insufficient timeline we will reimburse you up to \$5,000 for the claim.

YOU NEVER FORGET YOUR FIRST.

Introducing TPP PLUS™. The first-to-market storage property protection for RV & boat owners, from the most trusted leader in tenant property protection.



RV ownership is evolving, old stereotypes dying. The crazy Cousin Eddies with rolling rust buckets leaving trails of waste are giving way to six-figure castles on wheels. With RV sales up 40% and new highs predicted for 2021, Americans need a safe place to park their big toys – and they need big protection. And we've got it. First. New TPP PLUS™ provides one-of-a-kind storage property protection for RVs and boats, and new revenue for you.

TPP PLUS™ delivers all the firsts:

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- First-class tenant property protection for on-site accidents, external/internal damage and theft of contents up to \$250
- First-rate claims service experience and higher tenant satisfaction

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Tenant Property
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Mentorship in the MSSOA

Featured Member:

Ray Stoecklein



Ray Stoecklein, Storage (For Rent)
Festus, MO

Mentorship is an important part of any group or association. Technically, it serves a networking and educational avenue. Less formally, it provides guidance to the new guys and gals and provides a level of comfort and confidence to the group. The importance of mentoring goes beyond sharing skills and professional socialization, it serves as a facilitator of success and leadership. The MSSOA is blessed to have a solid foundation of owner and operators who have gone before us and are always willing to share with those in our association. In this issue of the Missouri Self Storage Monitor, we asked long time member Ray Stoecklein about his experiences in the self storage industry.

How did you get into self storage? What drew you to this industry?

Worked a job for 41 years. I observed the beginning of the storage business and it looked promising for myself. Always enjoyed meeting new people and working with the public.

What's the best advice, business related or other, you've been given, and how do you apply that to your business?

Be honest and ethical. Be a good listener for your customers. Keep your facility spotlessly clean. Answer the telephone with a smile. Smile-Smile-Smile.

How can small businesses make it through uncertain and challenging times?

Stick with the basics. Be firm with your rules and regulations. Be firm on your rent collections. Treat all customers with respect. Smile-Smile-Smile.

What can you share about the benefits of working together to build up the self storage industry in our state? In what ways can the MSSOA create a stronger association or industry?

Always strength in numbers. Pay attention to any members suggestions. (They may have a good one.)

**We want to thank Ray for his contribution to our association
and participation in our interview!**

Online Reputation Management for Self-Storage



You're likely familiar with managing your reputation in person, but what about online? You can gain or lose a significant amount of business on a select few websites, and if you aren't even aware of it, you can't possibly manage it or improve it. This article will be about the importance of your online reputation, how to start gaining control over it, and a guide on how to manage it properly.

Why Is Your Online Reputation Important?

For a traditionally in-person industry like self-storage, it can be difficult to conceptualize just how important an online reputation can be. Customers view the unit, sign the contract, and move their items onsite. How could a well-managed online presence impact that, and how could you benefit from a better online presence?

Consider your average customer: as of 2018, 84% of customers will not only look up online reviews, they will read at least ten online reviews before they feel like you are trustworthy, and 85% will give those reviews the same weight as if they had come from friends and family.

All of the feedback your potential customers can find online about you makes up your online reputation. And if it's terrible, or simply non-existent, they will choose someone else. Because customers trust reviews so much, it acts as social proof of the quality of your business and lends you credibility.

Mostly, online reviews have a similar impact as word-of-mouth marketing. When someone gets a word-of-mouth recommendation from a friend for a brand or product, they are five times more likely to buy. If 85% of your potential customers are giving reviews from strangers the same weight as a recommendation from a friend, then it stands that good reviews can do a lot for your self storage business.

Aside from the effect reviews have on potential customers, it is also one of the only places you can get unsolicited, real feedback from actual customers. Customers are indeed more likely to write a review if they have a negative experience- two to three times more likely- but you can even turn negative reviews into a benefit. That feedback will not only be helpful to you to point towards areas that could be improved, it will also give you a chance to respond in a way that rebuilds your credibility - and 89% of consumers read business' responses to reviews.

Finally, your online reputation affects your online search engine optimization (SEO), particularly locally. When potential customers are searching for self storage options in their area, they're very likely to turn to Google. When they input the search terms, they'll get what's called the "local pack," which is the top three recommended stores on Google. Google determines who gets in the local pack using a variety of metrics, and one metric is reviews - specifically quantity, frequency, and diversity of reviews. The better those are, the better chance you have of getting in that coveted spot.

How to Manage Your Online Reputation

Your online reputation may feel a bit out of your control, knowing that it comes from customers and visitors who take time out of their day to leave you a review. However, there is a lot you can do to improve your online reputation by

taking a few simple steps, especially if you're starting from scratch. Here is a step-by-step guide to managing your online reputation:

1. Claim Your Listings

There are multiple listings around the internet that you should be claiming as the owner -Google My Business, Facebook, and Yelp are the big three you should focus on, but there are many more. First, most of your traffic will come from Google, so if you don't exist on Google, most of your potential customers will be completely unable to find you.

Second, Facebook. Business owners can be reticent to be active on Facebook - they worry that there is an expectation of posting and being active on the site. Not to worry, you don't need to post or be active! You need a page for your business that has accurate information so that people can find you. While most of your customers will come from Google, it's still important to have your information available for those looking on Facebook.

Third, you need to claim your listing on Yelp. DO NOT encourage users to use Yelp, but DO claim your listing so you can respond to reviews on the platform. Yelp is still relatively widely used, especially to read reviews, so your presence there is essential. The problem with Yelp is that they pick and choose reviews in a way that tends to make businesses look bad.

Additionally, most people don't know that Siri pulls from Yelp before it pulls from Google. If anyone is doing a voice search for self-storage units in their area, Siri will check Apple Maps first, and then Yelp. Considering that voice search is on the rise, you want to claim your Yelp listing and update all your information on there as soon as possible.

The most important information to have is your phone number, address, hours you're open, and a link to your website. It is best always to keep these accurate and up-to-date - nothing will ensure a lousy review faster than having the wrong hours listed, and not actually being open when your website says you will be.

2. Monitor Reviews

We addressed above how important it is to respond to reviews-how can you react if you don't know when they even exist? It's better to respond late than never, but it's always best to respond as quickly as possible. Multiple services will alert you when a new review comes in, including Reputation.com and Yext. StoragePug also offers local SEO and real-time notifications for reviews. Aside from the potential customers who will read your review responses, Google also takes the length of time you take to respond into account when ranking you.

3. Respond to Reviews the Right Way

With so much riding on your response to reviews, particularly bad ones, it can be nerve-racking to write up a reply. After all, it's your livelihood, and you may perceive the reviewer to be exaggerating or lying, or you may just be upset that the situation happened in the first place. Learning how to respond to negative reviews is an important skill to have, and can only help you. If the review is real, which you should always assume it is, you'll need to take steps to rectify the situation. First, always stay calm and polite. Even if you feel like you aren't in the wrong, it never excuses responding angrily. Second, offer a solution. You can provide any solution that would be appropriate, like a call from you to talk further. That leads to the third step, which is to take the conversation offline. Offer an email or phone conversation about what went wrong to follow up; there's no use

hashing it out online. Here is a script that you can use:

"I'm sorry to hear that you were not happy with our [service/policy/bill]. Let's discuss this issue with you in more detail to find a solution that meets your needs. Please call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email me directly at your@emailaddress.com at your earliest convenience."

Fourth, ask for an update. Set a reminder for yourself to follow up with the reviewer to ask how things went on their second visit if they ended up scheduling one with you. Finally, learn and improve. Being that you are treating it as a real review, you'll need to do some research internally. If it is real and the situation did happen, you'll need to make sure it never happens again. If the review is fake, reframe your response as an opportunity to gain back the trust of everyone who will Google you, read that review, and have second thoughts. Whether real or fake, your response matters.

4. Get More Reviews

With all this emphasis on reviews, you may be wondering how you can get them in the first place. Aside from taking the steps we've already listed - claiming your listings and making sure you're active and accurate on as many sites as possible - there are ways you can increase the likelihood of getting more reviews.

The first way is to ask your customers. If you don't ask, it probably won't even enter their minds to do it. When they leave, you can tell them your name again, and let them know you'd appreciate a review about their experience, and leave it at that.

The second way, which is related, is to incentivize your managers to solicit reviews. That way, everyone is asking visitors and customers, and you can make a small competition out of it. It doesn't need to be a considerable investment, something like a little gift card for the highest numbers of reviews in a month or a quarter. The important thing is to get everyone in the habit of asking for reviews.

The third way is to showcase your reviews on your website. When previous visitors or customers visit your website,

they'll see reviews left by others and inspired to leave a review too. It's easy enough to set up a way for customers to leave a review through your website, or even just link to your Google page or Yelp page for them to leave the review there.

Finally, you can follow up with customers by email or text. If they've given you the information and enabled texts or emails, it can't hurt to send a quick automated follow-up thanking them for their business, and reminding them how much you would appreciate a review (with a link to do it, of course).

In the end, it's about encouraging all reviews, the more, the better. Do not pressure your customers to give you good reviews, and don't incentivize your managers based on good reviews. You already know how to respond to reviews based on the advice in this article, so don't be afraid of them!

Conclusion

Online reputation management is vital for every business, but the self-storage industry seems to be a bit late to the party. You may notice that other facilities in your area are hesitant to bring their business online - like online rentals and payments - so this is your chance to get ahead of the game. Claim your listings, make sure all your information is accurate, and practice soliciting and responding to reviews. Your online reputation is one of the most important representations of your business, so don't wait any longer to manage it the right way.

About Tommy

Tommy Nguyen is co-founder and COO of StoragePug, a self storage software company making online rentals easier. StoragePug combines modern marketing with our ecommerce platform, connecting customers to self storage through online rentals, bill pay, and digital lease signing. He's a husband to an amazing lady and father to three cats.

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The provisions of this subsection do not affect the scope of section 303.(c) PENALTIES-

- (1) MISDEMEANOR - A person who knowingly takes an action contrary to this section, or attempts to do so, shall be fined as provided in title 18, United States Code, or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both.
- (2) PRESERVATION OF OTHER REMEDIES - The remedy and rights provided under this section are in addition to and do not preclude any remedy for wrongful conversion otherwise available under law to the person claiming relief under this section, including any consequential or punitive damages.

In the PR Taylor case, the moving and storage company that had actually picked up their tenant's property at an Air Force Base and corresponded with the tenant through the Air Force, auctioned off the contents of the tenant's storage unit without first obtaining a court order as is required by the SCRA. The Justice Department attorney who filed the lawsuit issued a press release which stated: "This servicemember was called overseas to serve our country and returned home to find his personal possessions, family heirlooms and military awards auctioned off to the highest bidder. That is unacceptable. We will continue to protect the rights of servicemembers who dedicate their lives to preserving our security and freedom."

So, what if you do not know the military status of a customer? The structure of the SCRA strongly suggests that the storage operator must have notice of the delinquent customer's military status to be governed by the law. The operator does not have an obligation to actively research to learn whether a customer is in the military but the operator cannot ignore facts that may indicate that the customer is in the service. It is good practice to have a question in the rental agreement or rental application asking this question:

Are you or your spouse on active duty military service? Yes ____ No ____

If the answer is yes, it is helpful for the operator to provide the tenant with a supplemental information sheet to allow the tenant the opportunity to furnish additional information regarding alternate contacts in case the unit goes into delinquency. Those alternate contacts should include the base where the tenant is stationed and the name, address, phone number and e-mail of the servicemember's commanding officer.

Stay Safe and Happy Storing!
Scott

Zucker, S. Self Storage Legal Monthly Minute. November 2020

Scott Zucker is a partner in the law firm of Weissmann Zucker Euster Morochnik & Garber P.C. in Atlanta, Georgia. Scott specializes in business litigation with an emphasis on real estate, landlord-tenant and construction law. Scott is a frequent lecturer at national conventions and is the author of Legal Topics in Self Storage: A Sourcebook for Owners and Managers. He is also a partner in the Self Storage Legal Network, a subscription-based legal service for self storage owners and managers. Scott can be reached at 404-364-4626 or at scott@wzlegal.com.

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16 Transactions Closed in 2018 Totaling More Than \$25 Million



Value of Current Listings Exceeds \$53 Million



Over 16 Years of Self-Storage Only Transaction Experience