

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

“edithelp”

The Help Screen Editor

Version 1.20
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EDITHELP.EXE
Version 1.2

Introduction:

Nearly all of the Ohio Engineering programs have some sort of help provided for either the screen or the specific entry involved. The help information is stored in a file with a specialized format that is readily available but not directly a part of the program so that computer memory will not be tied up holding help information. Each program has an associated help file containing information in this format.

During the earlier stages of development of the Ohio Engineering package, a utility was developed specifically to generate these "help" files. This utility was rather crude but could be made to work.

It is very difficult to write meaningful help information. Items that are totally clear to the developer may be a mystery to the user. Additionally, there are times when help needs to be regionalized. In other words, design procedures might differ on opposite sides of the state or different regions of the country. For these reasons, it was decided that there was merit in cleaning up this utility so that it could be used by users as well as developers. With this philosophy, the user can make the screens display whatever help might be most useful to their staffs or themselves. Thus came the birth of "edithelp".

Some features of the program are locked out to the user. For example, the user cannot create a new help screen, delete a help screen or reorder the sequence of the screens. Since the help screens are all linked to the specific entry in computer code, things could really get messed up if the user could blindly change that link. You might ask for help on the benchmark and get help on moving the instrument back to the truck.

Supporting Files:

This utility program is contained in a file named "EDITHELP.EXE". In order to run, it must be supported by the following additional files on the default drive:

BRT71EFR.EXE

This is a *runtime* module that is copyrighted to Microsoft QuickBASIC™

OH_ENG.CFG

The file containing all of the specifics about your computing system such as type of printer. This file is generated and managed by the program named "*eng_cfg.exe*"

***.HLP**

There are several help files that can be managed using this program.

EDITHELP.EXE
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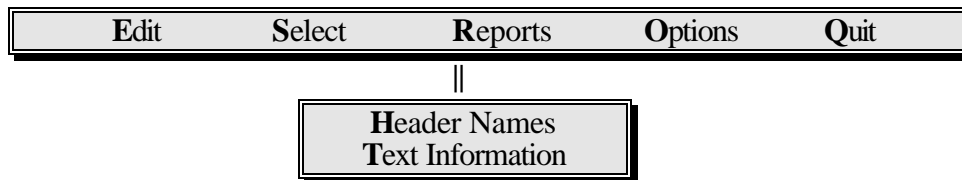
the program. Typically it would be one of two words that capsulates the data entry that is active.

The second box or window, is the text that is displayed as help.

Each help screen in the program being considered, is stored in the file as a “record”. The cursor will initially reside in the top box. By using the up and down arrows, you can move through the entire help file, one record at a time. (a counter will appear at the top of the screen). With each press of the up or down arrow, the screen should change to a different help screen. By using the PgUp / PgDn keys, the screen moves ten records at a time.

Pressing the return key while in the upper box, transfers the action to the lower box. From there, the system enters a text editor mode. While you might experience some behavior different from most text editors, there should be a lot of familiar responses such as home – beginning of the line; end – end of the line; delete; backspace, ins; etc. One key stroke that might not be as familiar is Ctrl Y which clears an entire line. The “Esc” key will move the cursor back to the top box.

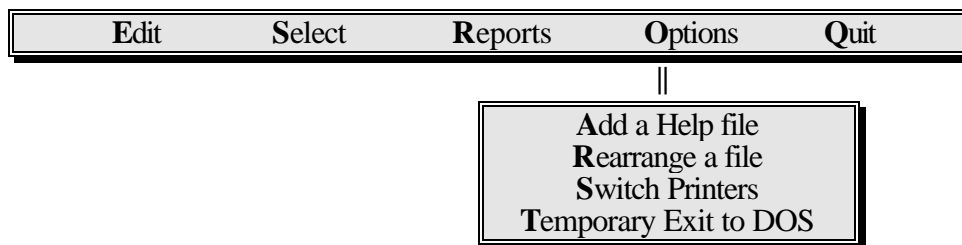
Reports



There are two reports that are available from the main menu. The “Header Names” report will generate a list of the headers (the top box on the edit screen) and print them on the screen, the local printer or to a file. This list is useful in determining the record number of the screen that you may wish to modify.

The second report includes the headers and text information for the complete help file. This report can almost be used as a user manual or it can be saved to a file, loaded into your favorite word processing program and run through the spell checker. Although you can not correct the misspelled words using your word processor, they can at least be located.

Options



The first two options, “Add a Help File” and “Rearrange a file”, are locked out to the user as they are solely development features.

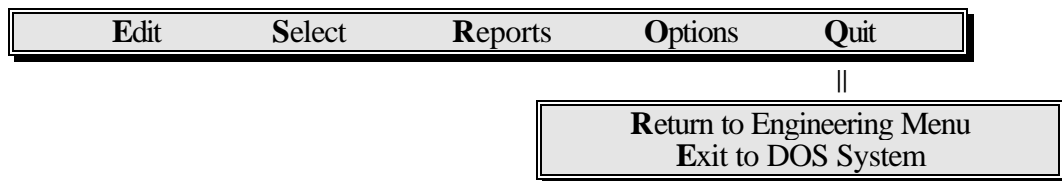
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Switch Printers:

If two different printers are available on your computer system, this option will allow you to change the identity of the printer that the program uses. Basically, this action changes the value of the codes that control the manner in which the printer behaves. For example, the codes that cause the printer to print in compressed code, etc.

Temporary Exit to DOS:

Many times it would be nice or even necessary to execute a DOS command while in the program. As an example, you can't remember the subdirectory where your data is so you need to check several subdirectories or even diskettes. This option will quickly return to the system prompt and still keep your program and data in memory. When you are ready to return to the program, simply enter "exit". There is one important point to remember! Be certain that you have returned to the subdirectory that contains the engineering program before entering "exit".



Quit:

The response to "quit" can generate several responses depending upon how your particular system is set up. If the main "engmenu.exe" file is available, you might be offered an option of returning to the Engineering Menu, exiting to the operating system (which could be the DOS prompt, windows, or the batch file that originally called the animal waste program) or going directly to one of several other engineering programs. If this "engmenu.exe" file does not exist, you will simply be asked to confirm that you really do want to quit.