



HOUSINGWIRE MAGAZINE  
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# CRUNCH TIME



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## What's next in field services?

Technology and ramped-up maintenance services top the list



*Regulation and compliance – these words have been at the forefront of the mortgage industry in the past year or so. As we prepare to enter 2015, focusing on compliance and new and constantly changing regulations will remain the industry's focus. Servicers will continue to take measures ensuring that consumers are protected and neighborhoods are free of blight. To do so, they rely heavily on their field services partners for assistance in maintaining compliance throughout the country. Those field services companies, like Safeguard Properties, must remain prepared to invest in the future and adjust their processes to deliver that high level of services to their clients.*

### Technology

Technology is king when it comes to compliance. I have often referred to Safeguard as not only a national field services business, but also a technology company. We have made significant investments in things like video, mobile technology, and geolocation mapping to help keep up with new regulations and ensure the highest level of quality control for our servicing clients.

Video is the biggest and most exciting technology on the horizon for field services. It will have a huge impact on the way defaulted and abandoned properties are maintained day-to-day. Safeguard is piloting its use in 2015 to determine how to best utilize it and ensure our clients, investors and vendors also have the capabilities to manage these types of files.

The possibilities are endless as we get closer to managing properties in the field in real-time with live video feeds. It will allow our vendors to video conference with us at Safeguard to get confirmation that they are at the correct prop-

erty. Damages will be able to be viewed more thoroughly through a video feed, and approvals for bids or repairs can come almost immediately, while the vendor is still onsite.

The use of video by our vendors also will allow us to better serve our clients by providing more up-to-the-minute data on their properties. Other decisions can be made in real-time, helping to improve the maintenance of the vacant property, enhance quality controls and decrease the time it takes to relay the property information to the servicing client.

In 2015, mobile technology will continue to have a huge impact on the field services industry. In the past few years, the use of mobile devices has changed the way field services companies do business. Field services companies will continue to utilize the capabilities of these devices to build controls into their processes to ensure the work is done right the first time.

Geolocation technology is another game-changer for field services as it relates to

mobile utilization. When a vendor snaps a photo at a property using Safeguard's proprietary photo application Photo Direct, the mobile device they are using will capture the longitude and latitude of where they are standing. If that data is not within a few feet of the historical data we have on record for that property, a red flag is set off within the app alerting the vendor that they may not be at the correct location. Photo Direct also records the date and time stamps for these photos. All of this is fully integrated into Safeguard's secured internal systems.

### Ramped-Up Maintenance

Field services companies need to remain flexible and willing to adjust processes and procedures to help servicing clients remain in compliance with new and changing regulations. Safeguard is at the forefront of the shift toward ensuring presale properties are maintained in "neighborhood-like" condition. We are working with our clients to offer mulching, weeding, cosmetic trimming of shrubs, replacing gutters, power-washing the exterior of the home and other add-on services across the country.

The use of clear boarding rather than plywood or other materials that call attention to the vacant property is another shift we see continuing into 2015. Clear boarding has become a requirement from investors and will remain the best way to secure broken windows and doors and protect the integrity of the abandoned property, in addition to reducing blight in neighborhoods.

Another big shift or trend in the coming year is the pre-conveyance inspection. These inspections not only help us in field services to identify property issues and discrepancies prior to conveyance, but it will help servicers manage the costs involved when properties are reconveyed.

As we focus on 2015, field services and property preservation companies need to be the rock that their servicing clients can lean on as regulations continue to change.

We must focus on compliance, and the best ways to do so are through investments in innovative technologies and by adjusting the way we do business to ensure servicers receive the highest level of quality in the work we perform on their behalf. Those words — regulation and compliance — will remain the industry's focus well beyond 2015. ■