



# **Electronic Filing in the U.S. District Court Northern District of Illinois**

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## **Quick Reference**

Revised 05/08

## Preparing a Document for Electronic Filing

### Document Size

Documents filed electronically are limited to 5 megabytes (MB) in size. This applies to each individual component of an electronic filing, not to the entire filing. For example, if you are filing a motion with several exhibits, the motion and each exhibit can be up to 5 megabytes (MB) in size. The motion is filed as the main document with the exhibits being included as attachments. Each attachment must be **labeled**. Further, as long as the combined exhibits do not exceed 5 megabytes in size, we encourage you to combine them into a single attachment. If you do, be sure to label the attachment appropriately, e.g., Exhibits A through D.

### Electronic Signatures

Electronically filed documents must include a signature block. The name of the filing user under whose login and password the document is submitted must be preceded by an “/s/” and typed in the space where the signature would otherwise appear.

**Example:**     /s/Ted Newman  
                  Attorneys R Us  
                  111 South First Street  
                  Anytown, Illinois 11111  
                  (555) 555-5555

### Certificate of Service

General Order, Section XI.C “Subject to the provisions of Fed. R. Civ. P. 5(b)(3), the Notice of Electronic Filing constitutes service under Fed. R. Civ. P. 5(b)(2)(D) and Fed. R. Crim. P. 49 (b) as to all E-filers in a case assigned to ECF”. [General Order on Electronic Case Filing](#)

### Document Format

All documents must be filed in Portable Document Format (PDF). Documents may be printed, published or scanned to PDF format.

### Document Restrictions

Electronically filed documents must include **NO** personal identification numbers such as social security numbers. **NO** restricted, ex parte, or sealed docs are to be electronically filed.

### **Electronically Filing a Document**

- Verify that the attorney logged into CM/ECF is same as the attorney whose name appears on the signature line.
- Verify that the correct event is listed at the beginning of the docket text. If incorrect, click **SEARCH**, type the name of your pleading, click **SEARCH** again and redo your filing.
- Verify that the correct case number was entered.
- If filing a motion for leave to file a document, verify that the subject document is filed as an **attachment** to the motion, and labeled as such.
- If filing a notice of motion, verify that the motion is linked to the notice.
- If you believe that you have made an e-filing error that needs to be corrected, contact the Help Desk at 312-846-8727.

### **Avoid the “Top” Filing Errors**

#### **#1 Wrong Event**

Verify that the correct event is listed at the beginning of the docket text. If incorrect, click **SEARCH**, type the name of your pleading, click **SEARCH** again and redo your filing.

#### **#2 Wrong or no electronic signature**

The electronic signature, typed at the signature line of the document, consists of an /s/ and the attorney’s name typed out. For example, /s/Ted Newman. Support staff supporting multiple attorneys should verify that they are logged in as the correct attorney!

#### **#3 No motion linked to Notice of motion**

Verify that you have linked (checked the box) the motion being noticed to the Notice of Motion.

#### **#4 Sealed document filed**

No sealed documents are to be filed electronically. Also verify that documents being filed contain no personal identifiers such as social security numbers.

### **How do I register for a CM/ECF Account**

CM/ECF accounts are provided to attorneys who have completed the District Court's training program, who are already registered as an e-filer in another district or bankruptcy court, or who have received training in e-filing from their firm, or are attorneys representing the United States in their official capacity. If you meet one or more of these criteria, you may pick up a registration form at the Clerk's Office or receive a form via e-mail by calling 312-435-5358, 312-435-5359, or 312-435-5853. [General Order on Electronic Case Filing](#)

### **Can my firm have a single CM/ECF account, or do I have to have my own account?**

CM/ECF accounts are issued only to individuals. You need your own account.

### **I submitted a completed registration form, but I haven't yet received my login and password. How can I check on the status of my account?**

If more than five days have passed since you submitted your registration form, you can check on the status of your account by calling 312-435-5358, 312-435-5359, or 312-435-5664.

### **Can the general public view CM/ECF cases and documents in the Clerk's Office?**

Yes. Terminals providing public access to case data in CM/ECF without the need to have a PACER login and password are available in the Clerk's Office, located in Chicago on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor of the Dirksen Courthouse, 219 South Dearborn. Public terminals are also available in the Clerk's Office in the Rockford, Illinois courthouse located at 211 South Court Street. The Clerk's Office is open to the public Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. through 4:30 p.m., except for legal holidays.

### **Can any member of the public use CM/ECF to file documents with the court?**

No. Access to the filing portion of CM/ECF is available to authorized case participants only.

### **How can I get training in how to file electronically?**

Free training classes are offered at the Dirksen Courthouse. For more information, see the training links on the Court's website. Training classes are open to both attorneys and staff.

**Do I need both a PACER account and a CM/ECF account to be an e-filer?**

Yes, you need both a CM/ECF account and a PACER account. The PACER account gives you the ability to read case dockets and view electronic images of documents. Your CM/ECF account is needed in order to electronically file a document with the Court.

**What is the difference between a PACER account and a CM/ECF Account?**

The PACER account gives you the ability to read case dockets and view electronic images of documents. Your CM/ECF account is needed in order to electronically file a document with the Court. You need **both** a CM/ECF account and a PACER account.

**How can I get a PACER account?**

You may call the center toll free at 1-800-676-6856 or go to the PACER Service Center's website at <http://www.pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/register.html> and complete the online form.

**My law firm has a single PACER account. Can I use that, or do I need my own PACER account?** You may use your firm's PACER Account.**What constitutes a page in CM/ECF for PACER billing purposes?**

Billable pages are calculated in two ways in CM/ECF. A formula is used to determine the number of pages for an HTML formatted report. Any information extracted from the CM/ECF database, such as the data used to create a docket sheet, is billed using a formula based on the number of bytes extracted. For a PDF document, the actual number of pages is counted to determine the number of billable pages. For report data retrieved from the CM/ECF system that is printed, the print job will not always match the number of pages billed. The number of pages printed is dependent on individual printer and browser settings. All users are charged equally for the same information regardless of the browser settings or printer configurations. A transaction receipt and the Review Billing History option are provided under Utilities for reviewing charges. Also, Review Transaction History is available on the PACER Service Center site in Account Information for reviewing transactions from all courts. The transactions are updated on the PACER Web Site by the middle of each month.

**Can the general public view CM/ECF cases and the documents in those cases using the Internet?**

The public can access civil case data in CM/ECF unless it has been sealed by the court. Access over the Internet to documents filed in criminal cases is limited to case participants, i.e., attorneys and defendants. To have access to case dockets and electronic documents using the Internet, you must have an account in the Public Access to Electronic Court Records (PACER) system.

### **What are the rules and procedures regarding filing electronically?**

Refer to General Order on Electronic Case Filing. [General Order on Electronic Case Filing](#)

### **Oops. I noticed that I made a mistake in the electronic filing. What do I do?**

If you believe that you have made an e-filing error that needs to be corrected, contact the Help Desk at 312-846-8727.

### **How do I add a signature to a document I am filing electronically?**

The requirements for signing a document that you are filing electronically are set out in Section X(A) of the General Order on Electronic Filing provides as follows:

“Electronically filed documents must include a signature block and must set forth the name, address, telephone number and the attorney's bar registration number, if applicable. In addition, the name of the e-filer under whose login and password the document is submitted must be preceded by an "s/" and typed in the space where the signature would otherwise appear.” [General Order on Electronic Case Filing](#)

### **Does a certificate of service need to be included with documents filed electronically?**

The General Order on Electronic Filing requires that a certificate of service be included with all documents filed electronically when service is made to any party who is not an e-filer or is not represented by an e-filer. The certificate of service may be included with the main document being filed or linked as an attachment to the main document. If all parties are represented by e-filers, no certificate of service is required. [General Order on Electronic Case Filing](#)

### **How many times will I be able to view my case documents as an attorney of record?**

If you are an attorney of record in a case, you will not be charged the first time you view a document. However, the next time you view the same document, you will be charged 8 cents per page, or up to \$2.40 per document. PACER will bill you after your account reaches \$10.00 in a calendar year. You have 14 days to view the document.

### **Can I combine a motion and a notice of motion in a single electronic filing?**

No. The Motion and the notice of motion **must be filed separately**. In addition, the motion must be filed **before** the notice of motion.

### **What kind of notification does the attorney of record receive on a case?**

All registered CM/ECF e-filers will receive an e-mail notification of all filings, which includes a hyperlink to the document. Participants who are not registered users must be mailed a copy of the filing by the attorney filing electronically.

### **An attorney in our office is out of town. He has asked us to file a motion for him in his absence, on behalf of his client. Can I file this document electronically?**

On the motion itself, sign the document with your name, on behalf of the absent attorney, i.e., /s/ John Worker on behalf of John P. Vacationer. When you electronically file the motion in CM/ECF, you will see the following on your screen: “The following attorney/party associations do not exist for this case. Please check which associations should be created for this case: John Doe, (pty:pla) represented by John Worker (aty)”.

**Do not** check this box; doing so adds you as an attorney on the case. The docket text will read that the document was filed by Attorney John Worker on behalf of Susie Client.

**Under no circumstances should this practice be used when filing an initial appearance.**

### **Can I file a sealed document electronically?**

No. Sealed cases and sealed documents **may not be filed electronically**. They must be filed in paper form. A party may electronically file a motion to file a document under seal. If the motion is granted, the assigned judge will electronically file an order authorizing the filing of the document under seal. The filing party shall then deliver the document to the Clerk's Office for conventional filing under seal.

### **Are there fees associated with e-filing?**

There are no fees to file electronically. For viewing documents in cases, you get one free look at documents that are filed in cases in which you are an attorney of record. For each subsequent viewing, you will be required to log in to PACER and pay a fee of \$.08 per page, not to exceed \$2.40 per document. We strongly recommend that you print or save the document during the first viewing to avoid these charges.

### **Can I combine separate exhibits in a single attachment?**

As long as the combined exhibits do not exceed 5 megabytes in size, we encourage you to combine them into a single attachment. If you do, be sure to label the attachment appropriately, e.g., Exhibits A through D.

### **How do I add counsel to a case?**

To add counsel in a case, electronically file an attorney appearance.

**Do I have to file a paper copy of a document that I have filed electronically?**

Yes, Local Rule 5.2(e) provides as follows: “Where a filing is made electronically of a pleading, motion, or document other than an appearance form or return of service, a paper copy shall be provided for the judge within one business day, unless the judge determines that a paper copy is not required.” The paper copy of the electronic filing should be placed in the drop box reserved for that purpose, located on the south end of the 20<sup>th</sup> floor Clerk’s Office, unless the judge has directed that such copies be delivered directly to chambers. General Order 07-0023 V. (H) provides as follows: “To the extent local rule or an order of the court requires filing with the court or service on an opposing party by a specific time of day, the document must be filed or served by that time of day to be timely and a courtesy copy submitted to the court within one business day.” [General Order on Electronic Case Filing](#)

### **What electronic versions of documents (images) are available?**

- Civil Cases      Initiating documents, e.g., complaints, and orders filed after 3/1/2000.  
Motions and responsive pleadings filed after 12/01/2001.  
All documents, except lengthy exhibits, filed after 10/1/2002.  
All documents filed after 10/26/2007.
- Criminal Cases      The same criteria apply to criminal cases except that documents  
filed in criminal cases may be viewed via the Internet only by case  
participants, *i.e.*, attorney and defendants.

### **Is the system available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week?**

Yes. With the exception of 7:00 through 7:30 a.m. on Fridays, which is reserved for routine system maintenance, CM/ECF is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The system may be down temporarily on other occasions, if an unplanned need for maintenance arises.

### **What hardware and software do I need to use CM/ECF?**

PC or MAC  
Pentium III or higher  
Minimum 256MB RAM  
A high-speed Internet connection  
Acrobat Reader 4.0 or higher  
Acrobat Writer 4.0 or higher, to publish documents to PDF format  
Internet Browser: Mozilla Firefox is the recommended browser  
A scanner to transmit documents that are not in your word processing system

### **Why is my login failing?**

The system is case sensitive. If you have the CAPS lock on, your login will fail. Also, be sure that you are not using your PACER login to try to access your CM/ECF account. You can also try to clear the cache of your computer.

### **How large can my electronic filing be?**

The General Order on Electronic Case Filing provides that an electronic filing should not exceed 5 megabytes in size. This applies to each individual component of an electronic filing, not to the entire filing. In other words, if you are filing a motion with several exhibits, the motion itself and each exhibit can each be up to 5 megabytes in size.

**The exhibits I need to file with my main document are too large. What can I do?**

Subdivide the exhibit, and identify each attachment appropriately, e.g., Exhibit A, Part 1, Exhibit A, Part 2.

**When I click on the document link in my e-mail, it prompts me for a login and password.**

1. In civil cases the first time you click on a document link in your e-mail the system should display the document without requiring a login. For each subsequent viewing, you will be required to log into PACER and pay a fee of \$.08 per page, not to exceed \$2.40 per document.
2. In criminal cases the first time you click on a document link in your e-mail the system requires you to enter your CM/ECF login and password. Next, you need to enter your PACER login and password. You will not be charged the first time you view a criminal document.
3. For Civil Social Security cases the first time you click on a document link in your email, the system requires you to enter your CM/ECF login and password. Next, enter your PACER login and password. You will not be charged the first time you view a document. If you do not have a PACER login and password, contact the PACER Service Center at 1-800- 676-6856 or the PACER Service Center's website at <http://www.pacer.psc.uscourts.gov/register.html>.

***How do I change my CM/ECF password?***

Please refer to the instructions available in the [User Guide](#).

**How do I add additional e-mail addresses so someone else in my office can receive Notices of Electronic Filing?**

Please refer to the instructions available in the [User Guide](#).

**How do I know if my electronic filing was successful?**

The last screen you see when you electronically file a document is a copy of the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF). If you see the NEF, you know that your filing was successful. Another way to verify your filing is to view a copy of the case docket. If you do this, standard PACER fees will be charged.

**Occasionally, CM/ECF will fail to show the correct menu options, or will begin acting strangely after it has worked for some time. What can I do to correct this?**  
Right click in the window and select Reload Frame (Netscape) or Refresh (IE). If that does not bring back all options have the user clear their cache or temporary Internet files.  
*Mozilla Firefox is the recommended browser.*

### **In Mozilla Firefox**

Click the **Tools** menu and then select **Options**.  
Click **Privacy** on the left side of the screen.  
Click the **Clear** button next to Cache.

### **In Netscape**

Click the **Edit** menu, and then select **Preferences**.  
Double click **Advanced**.  
Click **Cache**.  
Click **Clear Memory Cache**, and then click **OK**.  
Click **Clear Disk Cache**, and then click **OK**.

### **In Internet Explorer**

Click the **Tools** menu and then click **Internet Options**.  
Click **Delete Files** (Temporary Internet Files).