



MAGISTRATE JUDGE MICHAEL F. IASPARRO
327 South Church Street, Courtroom 3200
Rockford, IL 61101

JURY EVIDENCE RECORDING SYSTEM (JERS)

1. INTRODUCTION TO JERS

JERS is a computer system that the jury will use to review exhibits on a wide-screen video monitor, rather than reviewing paper copies. The jury room has the JERS computer, a touch-screen monitor for the jury to pick an exhibit to display, and the wide-screen monitor. JERS can display what otherwise would have been on paper (including photos), and JERS also can play audio and video files.

We are experimenting with this system to start moving toward as much digital presentation as possible, with all of its display and cost-reducing advantages. With JERS, the jury can zoom-in on parts of an exhibit, and for audio and video, there is no need for a party to supply the jury with a laptop for deliberations. We hope that in the future there will be other advantages, such as a text-search function. Thanks in advance for your patience as we continue to learn how best to use JERS.

JERS is not directly used to present evidence in court during trial; right now, it is just used to display exhibits during deliberations. But JERS does *indirectly* affect your trial preparation because you must supply your exhibits to the Court in digital format, and you must name your exhibits using a specific convention. This in turn affects your preparation even for the pretrial conference, because Judge Iasparro requires that the parties exchange proposed exhibits before the pretrial conference (more on this below, as well as in Judge Iasparro's Standing Order Governing Proposed Pretrial Orders).

2. FILE TYPES USABLE WITH JERS

JERS accepts these common file types:

Documents and Photographs: .pdf, .jpg.

Video and Audio Recordings: .avi, .wmv, .mpg, .mp3, .wma, .wav

3. EXHIBIT-NAMING CONVENTION

To use JERS, both sides must use the following exhibit-naming convention, which also will serve as the file name for the digital file:

the exhibit number, followed by an underscore, followed by a neutral description of the exhibit.

The convention is thus: <**exhibit number**>__<**exhibit description**>.<**file extension**>¹

Examples:

- 1_Financial Statement 2009 Annual.pdf
- 2_Contract 2010 Renewal.pdf
- 3_Photo Front Door.jpg
- 4_Audio Dec 11 2013 Phone Call.mp3
- 5_Video Traffic Stop.wmv

Use **consecutive numbers** to designate exhibits; do *not* use letters to distinguish exhibits. Also, do *not* use an “exhibit part,” such as 1A or 2A. Just use consecutive numbers (plus the neutral description). The neutral description cannot be more than 200 characters (hopefully, you will never come close to that limit).

You might reasonably wonder whether JERS will mix up the parties’ exhibits because both sides are using numbers. We have tested this convention and it works because JERS itself adds a party prefix for each side (“Pla” (or “Gov” for government) and “Def”) when we import the files into JERS, party-by-party.

If there are multiple parties on a particular side, then you must coordinate with your co-plaintiff’s or co-defendant’s attorney to generate a consecutively numbered set of exhibits. In the rare case of dual juries, we will discuss how to handle the JERS submission.

If you are using litigation-display software that imprints a “digital” exhibit sticker on documentary exhibits, that is fine, though you should confine the exhibit sticker to the party designation (*e.g.*, Pla or Gov, and Def) and the exhibit number.

One last thing: a **physical object** of course will not be imported into JERS, but you should still assign a consecutively numbered exhibit designation to it, along with a neutral description. Then create a one-page .pdf with the exhibit number and neutral description on it, and submit those exhibits as part of the JERS disc. By creating this stand-in for physical objects, we accomplish two things: (1) we can print a comprehensive exhibit list before the trial for the Court and for the parties, which we all can use to track whether an exhibit is allowed into evidence (including physical objects); and (2) the jury’s exhibit list will be complete, and it will serve as a reminder of what physical objects were allowed into evidence.

4. PRETRIAL CONFERENCE EXHIBITS

In order to maintain consistency in the record, you must use the JERS exhibit-naming convention even at the pretrial-conference stage (please refer to Judge Iasparro's Standing Order Governing Proposed Final Pretrial Orders for more detail). Five business days before the pretrial conference, supply the exhibits to the Court (and to the other side) on a USB drive, DVD, or CD. Consistent with the Standing Order, you will also be supplying chambers with two paper copies of only the objected-to exhibits, double-sided in three-ring binders.

5. TRIAL EXHIBITS BEFORE TRIAL BEGINS

After the pretrial conference, **do not renumber** the exhibits, even if during the pretrial conference the Court deemed some of them inadmissible. This will preserve consistency of exhibit numbering from the pretrial conference and throughout trial, and the record will be clearer.

Five business days before the trial, **supply the trial exhibits** to the Court's operations specialist and to the other side, again on a USB drive, DVD, or CD. At this trial stage, you need not include exhibits that have been deemed inadmissible (you may include exhibits that still have a chance of being allowed, *e.g.*, if the other party opens the door to evidence deemed otherwise inadmissible). Consistent with the Standing Order Governing Proposed Final Pretrial Orders, you should continue to include even those exhibits that are not likely to be allowed directly into evidence, but to which the Court will likely need to refer (*e.g.*, deposition transcripts for impeachment of will-call witnesses). The Court will run a test to ensure that the exhibits are imported correctly into JERS. For now, also supply **one copy of the exhibits in paper** form. This paper set will serve as the backup to JERS, in the event that JERS suffers a technical failure during deliberations.

6. TRIAL EXHIBITS NEWLY ADDED DURING TRIAL

When an exhibit is allowed into evidence during trial and the exhibit was not previously supplied on the JERS disc, not surprisingly the exhibit must follow the same exhibit-naming convention as described above. Counsel for the offering party must supply the exhibit in digital format as soon as possible (a thumb drive comes in handy for this), and the operations specialist will import it into JERS.

7. CLOSE OF EVIDENCE

Before closing arguments, we will confer on the record to ensure agreement on which exhibits were allowed into evidence during the trial. After jury instructions, the lawyers will confer with the operations specialist to examine the list of exhibits to be released to the jury for deliberations on JERS. The jury will **not be supplied with paper copies**, unless there is good cause for a particular exhibit (or if JERS breaks down).

Physical-object exhibits that the Court allows the jury to examine during deliberations will be provided to the jury as usual, via the court security officer.

8. USE OF JERS BY THE JURY

At the end of jury instructions, the Court will inform the jury that they will be using the JERS system. The jury will watch a video tutorial that explains how to use the system. Judge Iasparro will accompany the jury into the jury room to view the tutorial, but will instruct the jury that, like any other question during deliberations, the jury must ask questions about JERS in writing (and like any other jury question, the Court will share it with counsel before responding). The JERS computer is not equipped to allow the jury to access the internet, or indeed any other program other than JERS.

If JERS fails during deliberations, the jury will ask for help in writing. The systems staff will not be permitted in the jury room without the Court's express permission, and only after the jury has been escorted out of the jury room. If the problem is not fixable in a short time, the Court will provide the jury with the paper-copy backup of the allowed exhibits.

Rev. 5/30/2025

¹ The file-type extension (*e.g.*, .pdf, .wmv) is automatically added by your computer; it is included here for completeness.