Seats of Court:

Potter Stewart Courthouse
100 E. 5th Street, Room 324
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Joseph P. Kinneary Courthouse
85 Marconi Boulevard, Room 260
Columbus, OH 43215

Federal Building
200 W. 2nd Street, Room 712
Dayton, OH 45402

United States District Court
Southern District of Ohio

ELECTRONIC FILING

COMING IN THE FALL '03

Cincinnati

Columbus

Dayton

Electronic Filing

The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio is implementing the Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) docketing system. The court anticipates "going live" in the fall of 2003

The CM/ECF system was developed by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts and is now being used by several other U.S. district and bankruptcy courts. The system provides unprecedented access to Court records and has proven that widely available and inexpensive technology can accommodate electronic filing in nearly all federal cases. It is expected that the CM/ECF system will be adopted by the majority of federal courts in the near future.

The CM/ECF system provides access, over the Internet, to up-to-the-second docket sheets as well as to most case documents. The CM/ECF system also accepts documents filed electronically over the Internet. While it is not necessary that documents be filed electronically to have them entered into the CM/ECF system, the Court will strongly encourage electronic filing.

Visit our web site at www.ohsd.uscourts.gov

How are documents prepared?

Attorneys create documents on their own computers just as they do now. However, instead of printing the documents on paper and delivering them to the Court, the attorneys save the documents in a portable document format that allows other system users to view the documents in their original format, regardless of the type of computer or word processing system that was used to create the documents or is being used to view them.

How do I file electronically?

Attorneys access the Court's electronic filing system over the Internet. After establishing their identity by entering a Court assigned user identification name and password, attorneys enter the case number in which their document is to be filed, the name of the party for whom the document is being filed and the type of document being submitted (answer, answer with cross-claim, etc.). The document is then transmitted to the Court's computer.

What happens next?

Once the document is received by the Court, the electronic filing system:

- Sends a receipt to the sender verifying that the document has been received.
- Updates the docket sheet.
- Makes the updated docket sheet and the document itself immediately available to anyone with access to the system.

- Sends a notice of filing to all parties who have agreed to receive electronic notice.

What if the document was not created on a computer?

The Court seeks to have as many documents as reasonably possible filed electronically. The Court recognizes, however, that some documents may not be available in electronic format--for example, certain medical records. Nevertheless, many of those documents can be easily and inexpensively scanned for electronic filing. Documents or objects that cannot be scanned reasonably will be filed and served in the traditional manner. Advance planning will help avoid the need to make last minute decisions on such matters.

Are any documents precluded from being filed electronically?

Electronic filing of the initial pleading in a case is currently not permitted, although that may change in the future. In addition, documents to be placed under seal may not be filed electronically, but must be filed in the traditional manner.

What are the benefits?

Electronic filing streamlines the typically time-consuming and costly process of delivering legal documents to the Court and sending copies to all the parties in the litigation. The system also improves access to Court records by making documents available even when the Courthouse is otherwise closed for business.

Who decides if it will be used?

The Court strongly encourages electronic filing in most cases. Attorneys may file electronically in any case placed into the CM/ECF system, unless the Court orders otherwise. Attorneys will be provided with guidelines regarding all facets of electronic filing.

Which cases are best suited?

Electronic filing is suitable for nearly all civil cases. The only civil cases specifically excluded from electronic filing are those that are filed under seal.

What do I need to do?

An attorney seeking to file documents electronically in the Southern District of Ohio must be admitted to practice in this Court and must have completed an electronic filing registration form. Upon completion of the form, the attorney will be assigned a user identification name and password that will permit access to the system and serve as that attorney's signature on all documents filed for Fed. R. Civ. P. 11 purposes. Attorneys must secure their passwords and notify the Court if they learn that a password has been compromised.

What equipment do I need?

In order to file electronically in this Court, parties need the following:

- a computer running a Windows or a Macintosh operating system
- Adobe Acrobat 3.0 or higher to convert documents from a word processor format to portable document format (PDF)
- a PDF-compatible word processor like Macintosh or Windows-based versions of WordPerfect and Word
- Internet access supporting a transfer rate of 28.8 kbs or higher
- Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher Netscape 4.6 or higher
- Access to a scanner to image non-computerized documents.

Is the system secure?

The electronic filing system has several layers of security. An identification name and password are required to access the system. Documents are encrypted and transmitted through your browser's Secure Sockets Layer. In addition, the electronic receipt issued by the Court contains a unique validation code that works along with the portable document format to ensure that documents cannot be altered after being received by the Court.

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