

CASE MANAGEMENT/ELECTRONIC CASE FILES

TRAINING CLASS USER'S GUIDE

Getting Started

Introduction

This manual provides instruction on how to use the Electronic Filing System to file some commonly filed documents with the Bankruptcy Court as well as how to view and retrieve docket sheets and documents. It assumes a working knowledge of Netscape, Internet Explorer, Word Processing software, Bankruptcy preparation software and Adobe Acrobat. Please refer to the respective instruction manuals for specific questions regarding those applications.

Help Desk

Telephone the Court's Help Desk at 478-752-3506, option 3, then option 3 once again between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, if you need assistance related to CM/ECF. Choose option 3, then option 4 for information regarding CMCEF registration and logon / password information.

Court's Website

To access information, materials relating to CM/ECF, the Training database and Live database, log on to the Court's website at: www.gamb.uscourts.gov. The most recent information regarding CM/ECF may be found at this web site. For direct access to the training database, go to: ecf-train.gamb.uscourts.gov.

It is strongly recommended that participants take advantage of filing documents in the training database before filing a document in the "Live" database.

NOTE: Your login and password for the "Live" system will not be activated until you have completed the required training or until you notify the Court that you are a current ECF filer in another Court.

Facts About CM/ECF

Nationwide implementation of the federal judiciary's Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) system is nearly completed in the district and bankruptcy courts. CM/ECF not only replaces the Courts' aging electronic docketing and case management systems but also provides Courts the capability to have case file documents in electronic format and to accept filings over the Internet. This results in a completely electronic "case file" that does

not have any papers associated with it at the Court. Therefore, all case information is available for examination electronically through the Internet. ECF is now the primary method for filing documents with the Court and for retrieving case information from the Court.

Benefits:

- ▶ Registered attorneys are able to file and retrieve documents 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- ▶ Case information is available to attorneys, parties and the general public through the Internet. This includes the ability to view the full text of all electronically filed documents.
- ▶ Attorneys registered on the system receive e-mail notification of filed documents electronically.
- ▶ Since ECF uses Internet standard software, the out-of-pocket cost of participation for attorneys is typically very low. You'll also experience a reduction in mail, courier and copying fees.
- ▶ The system is user friendly and easy to learn. Filers prepare a document using conventional word processing software, then save it as a PDF file. After logging into CM/ECF with a Court-issued login and password, then you will enter basic information relating to the case and document being filed, attach the document, and submit it to the Court. A notice verifying Court receipt of the filing is generated automatically. Under certain circumstances, other parties in the case may automatically receive e-mail notification of the filing.

Access:

Access to files using ECF requires a filing login and password. The Court issues logins and passwords for filing.

What's Needed:

Users will need the following hardware and software to electronically file, view, and retrieve documents in the Electronic Filing System:

- ▶ A personal computer running a standard platform such as Windows or Macintosh.
- ▶ An Internet provider using Point to Point Protocol (PPP).
- ▶ CM/ECF is designed to work with Netscape 7.2 and Internet Explorer 6, and may not function correctly with earlier versions of these browsers. Note: The default settings for Netscape 7.2 suppresses popup windows. You will need to change this to allow pop-ups for certain programs used by this court to work properly. [Edit/Preferences, Privacy & Security, Popup Window Controls].

- ▶ Adobe Acrobat PDF Writer software to convert documents from a word processor format to portable document format (PDF). This is because all documents filed in ECF must be in PDF. This format was chosen because it allows a document to retain its pagination, formatting and fonts no matter what type of computer is used to view or print the document. It is also an open standard format. Adobe developed the format and offers software that allows conversion of documents created in most word processing systems into PDF. Acrobat Writer Versions 4.0 and 5.0 adequately meet the CM/ECF filing requirements and is recommended. Several word processing programs also contain features that convert documents created in those programs into PDF. Some newer versions of WordPerfect and Word have PDF software exchanges built into their programs; however, the Adobe software creates the cleanest conversions with the smallest file size.
- ▶ A PDF compatible word processor like Macintosh or Windows based versions of WordPerfect and Word.
- ▶ A scanner to create images of documents which cannot be created using your word processing system or other bankruptcy petition preparation software. **Recommended:**
 - Scanning Resolution: 300 dots per inch (dpi)
 - Scanner Setting: 300 pixels per inch (ppi) or higher.
- ▶ If you use a modem to connect to your Internet service provider, we recommend one with a speed of at least 56k. We would further like to recommend the use of a DSL or cable modem line in lieu of a standard telephone line.

Fees

There is no additional fee associated with filing documents electronically - but existing document filing fees do apply. Electronic access to Court data is available through the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) program. Case participants and case attorneys can receive one free look at documents filed electronically in your cases, then save or print the copy for your files. The login used to view the free look must be associated with the party. Previously, charges were limited to 30 pages for PDF documents. There is now no limit on charges made for transcripts, and opinions may be viewed without charge. In addition, the 30 page cap now applies to charges for queries and for the Cases, Claims Activity and Docket Activity reports. As directed by Congress to fund electronic access through user fees, the judiciary has set the fee at the lowest possible level sufficient to recoup program costs.

Filing fee payments are made interactively as part of the electronic filing process. You will use Internet Credit Card Processing (Pay.gov) to pay filing fees with your credit card at the time of e-filing or at the end of the day. You will get a receipt number immediately upon charging the credit card. With the Pay.gov program, you can review Internet credit card transaction payment history, review any outstanding payments due to the Court and make on-line payments of unpaid balances at any time.

NOTE:

Effective August 28, 2005 - all CM/ECF users making fee payments by Internet credit card through Pay.gov must use **Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher** as their browser. This is the only browser supported by the Treasury's Pay.gov system, which is scheduled to be deployed on August 28, 2005. Previous versions of Pay.gov worked with Netscape 4.7; however, recent testing of version 3.2 has confirmed that this will no longer be the situation. Therefore, you are encouraged to acquire and use Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher for all fee payments. Netscape will continue to work with CM/ECF so long as interaction with Pay.gov for fee payments is not necessary.

Security and Signature Issues:

Any user must register with the Court to use CM/ECF. It uses a login and password to authorize users. When registering to use the system, you will sign an agreement to the effect that use of the assigned login/password constitutes your signature on the document electronically filed. Those electronically filed documents will show your signature as /s/, followed by your typed name. You may authorize others to use the assigned login/password, understanding that whatever document that is filed electronically and showing your signature as /s/ followed by your typed name is deemed to have your original handwritten signature on the original pleading. It is recommended that such access be limited. The system is deemed secure by the National Security Agency. Documents are assigned unique electronic identifications.

PACER

All users require a valid PACER login and password. The login permits access to all nationally supported PACER systems. See <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov> for a complete list. Other information:

- ▶ PACER login can be permanently linked to the CM/ECF login so that it does not have to be re-entered. It can also link the filing account with an appropriate PACER account for billing purposes.
- ▶ A hyperlink to filed documents is provided to parties receiving a notice of filing. Access to the linked document is free the first time it is accessed for users receiving electronic notices. All users are advised to print or save the documents in order to avoid future PACER charges.

Participants may register for Pacer access at www.pacer.psc.uscourts.gov .