

# Electronic Case Filing (ECF) Tips for Civil Filings

Listen Carefully,  
Tip #1:  
When in doubt  
call the  
ECF helpdesk  
at  
**612-664-5155**  
**866-325-4975**



Training for the  
Legal Community

Presented by:  
U.S. District Court  
District of Minnesota  
Updated March, 2012

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**Conventional Filing Placeholder**

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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA**

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**PLACEHOLDER FOR  
[Title (in ALL CAPS) of doc being filed  
conventionally]**

[Plaintiff's Name]

Plaintiff(s)

v.

Case Number: [Case Number]

[Defendant's Name]

Defendant(s)

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This document is a placeholder for the following item(s), which are filed in conventional or physical form with the Clerk's Office:

[list item(s) for which this notice serves as a placeholder in ECF]  
(e.g.: Exhibit A - Photo of Airplane)

If you are a participant in this case, this filing will be served upon you in conventional format.

This filing was not e-filed for the following reason(s):

\_\_\_ Voluminous Document\* (Document number of order granting leave to file conventionally: \_\_\_ )

\_\_\_ Unable to Scan Documents (e.g., PDF file size of one page larger than 15 MB, illegible when scanned)

\_\_\_ Physical Object (description):

\_\_\_ Non Graphical/Textual Computer File (audio, video, etc.) on CD or other media

\_\_\_ Item Under Seal pursuant to a court order\* (Document number of protective order: \_\_\_ )

\_\_\_ Item Under Seal pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2 and Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1  
(Document number of redacted version: \_\_\_ )

\_\_\_ Other (description):

\* Filing of these items requires Judicial Approval.

E-file this placeholder in ECF in place of the documents filed conventionally. File a copy of this Placeholder and a copy of the NEF with the Clerk's Office along with the conventionally filed item(s).

## Filing Documents Under Seal

When filing a sealed document pursuant to a protective order or pursuant to the Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2 and Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1 conventional filing is permitted without seeking additional leave of the court. The following procedures apply:

1. Prepare the Conventional Filing Placeholder (available on the FORMS page of the court's website at [www.mnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.mnd.uscourts.gov)). This will be used to replace the actual document that will be filed conventionally. The placeholder explains to the court and customers what the actual filing is and why it has not been added to ECF.
2. E-file the placeholder in ECF in place of the sealed document(s) being filed conventionally in order to indicate, in ECF, the existence of documents that will reside on the shelf in the clerk's office.
3. Print the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) for the entry and the Conventional Filing Placeholder.
4. Attach the NEF and Conventional Filing Placeholder as a cover sheet to the front of the sealed document to be conventionally filed.
5. File the original sealed document(s), conventionally, with the Clerk's Office no later than 5:00 p.m. on the due date.

**NOTE:** *If filing sealed documents before e-filing the placeholder, attach the placeholder to the front of the sealed document to be conventionally filed. Mail or deliver sealed documents to the Clerk's Office with a cover letter stating that the e-filing will be completed later.*

*After e-filing the placeholder, print the NEF, staple it to the front of the placeholder and deliver it to the same Clerk's Office so that Clerk's Office staff can match the sealed documents to the appropriate electronic entry.*

6. Mail or deliver a COURTESY COPY (with a printed paper copy of the NEF attached) pursuant to Section I, Part F of the Procedure Guide for the District Judge or Magistrate Judge handling the matter in a separate envelope.
7. Serve all sealed documents filed conventionally (i.e., in paper form), with a printed-paper copy of the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) attached as a cover sheet, on all parties entitled to service. The e-notice of the filing of the placeholder for these documents shall not constitute service.
8. File a Certificate of Service in ECF for all conventionally filed sealed documents.
9. The Clerk's Office will note receipt of the conventionally filed original sealed documents on the record.

## Applications to File Conventionally

1. **Leave of Court Required for Conventional Filing.** A party must seek leave of the court to file a document conventionally, except for the following materials, which can be filed conventionally without a court order:
  - a. Items that cannot be converted to electronic form, such as:
    - i. video/audio tape,
    - ii. photo, chart, graph, diagram or text document for which just one page exceeds 15 MB in size when converted at 300 dpi
  - b. The “administrative record” in Social Security and Habeas Corpus cases (see Sections IV and V respectively of the Civil Procedure Guide).
  - c. Documents filed under seal pursuant to protective order (see Section IX, Part D of the Civil Procedure Guide).
  - d. Unredacted documents filed under seal pursuant to the Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2 and Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1 (see Section III, Part D of the Civil Procedure Guide).
2. **Obtaining Leave to File Conventionally.** To request permission to file certain documents conventionally:
  - a. Complete and file the “Application to File Conventionally” form found on the FORMS page of our website at [www.mnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.mnd.uscourts.gov).
    - i. Complete the form with a **detailed description** of why you are unable to file the documents electronically.
    - ii. The most common reason for filing this application would be for voluminous exhibits; i.e., 8 banker boxes (see Section IX of the Civil Procedure Guide).
    - iii. Applications based on incomplete explanations will not be granted.
  - b. The application must be filed in ECF as "Application to File Conventionally" under "Other Documents," and approved before the filing due date.
  - c. The filer must allow **7 days** for the assigned Magistrate Judge to review this request.
  - d. The Magistrate Judge will issue an order granting or denying the application.

*Sample of Application to File Conventionally*

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA**

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\_\_\_\_\_,  
Plaintiff,

v.

\_\_\_\_\_,  
Defendant.

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**APPLICATION TO  
FILE CERTAIN DOCUMENTS  
CONVENTIONALLY**

Case No. \_\_\_\_cv\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

The undersigned attorney, \_\_\_\_\_, the attorney of record  
for \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, in the above captioned matter,  
seeks leave of the court to file the following items conventionally (provide a **detailed description** of the  
documents to be filed conventionally - use additional pages as needed):

Leave to file conventionally is requested for the following reasons (**be very specific** by including  
(i) the format of the information, (ii) approximate number of pages, and (iii) an explanation as to why the  
documents cannot be filed electronically - use additional pages as needed): \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_\_.

[Attorney's signature block (incl phone #)]

## The Federal Rules and Personal Identifiers

Pursuant to the Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2 and Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1, in addition to filing a redacted version of the document in ECF, a party filing a document containing personal data identifiers **may** also:

1. File an unredacted document under seal without seeking leave of the court in accordance with Section III, Part D of Civil Procedure Guide regarding filing documents under seal (see also below),

OR

2. File a reference list under seal without seeking leave of the court in accordance with Section III, Part D of Civil Procedure Guide regarding filing documents under seal (see also below). The reference list shall contain the complete personal data identifier(s) and the redacted identifier(s) used in its place in the filing.

### To file documents containing personal identifiers:

1. Redact the pleading pursuant to the Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2 and Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1
2. File the redacted version of the document electronically in ECF.
3. If filing an unredacted document, then file:
  - a. A **Conventional Filing Placeholder** as an attachment indicating the existence of the sealed document on the record. The Conventional Filing Placeholder form is available on the FORMS page of the court website at [www.mnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.mnd.uscourts.gov).
  - b. Print the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) for the redacted version of the Conventional Filing Placeholder and attach both to the envelope of the sealed version or list.
  - c. Seal the unredacted version or list in accordance with Section IX, Part D, Subpart 5 of the Civil ECF Procedure Guide as follows:
    - Seal by closing, fastening, taping, or otherwise to secure the document in an envelope no larger than 9x12 with the following information in the front of the envelope:

• Case Number	• Case Name
• Party name and Complete Document Title (i.e., Defendant Johnson's Affidavit of John Smith)	
• Document Number Assigned by ECF for the redacted version	
• The words: "SEALED" or "CONFIDENTIAL"	
• <b>UNREDACTED DOCUMENT ENCLOSED</b> (Redacted Version filed in ECF as Document #[number]) OR	
• <b>REFERENCE LIST ENCLOSED</b> (Redacted Version filed in ECF as Document #[number])	

4. File the sealed unredacted version or list conventionally in accordance with Section IX, Part D of the Civil ECF Procedure Guide as follows:
  - A. The paper original of the sealed document shall be filed with the clerk's office **before 5:00 p.m.** on the due date.
  - B. Mail or deliver TWO COURTESY COPIES (with a copy of the NEF attached) of the **sealed** document, as required by Section I, Part F of the Civil ECF Procedure Guide, to the District or Magistrate Judge handling the matter in a separate envelope (if papers are related to a motion, only ONE courtesy copy is required).
  - C. The **sealed** document shall be served conventionally, with a copy of the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF), by the filer on parties who are entitled to service. The e-notice of the court's receipt of these documents shall not constitute service.
  - D. File a Certificate of Service in ECF for all conventionally filed sealed documents.
  - E. The Clerk will note receipt of the sealed unredacted version and/or reference list on the record as follows:
    - i. Pursuant to the Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2, or pursuant to the Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1 an unredacted version of this document has been filed under seal with the clerk. SEALED DOCUMENT RECEIVED ON [DATE].

OR

    - ii. Pursuant to the Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2, or pursuant to the Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1a reference list of personal identifiers and codes used in this document has been filed under seal with the clerk. SEALED DOCUMENT RECEIVED ON [DATE].
5. The court, as part of the record, shall retain the sealed unredacted version and/or reference list.

## Tips

- Home addresses need to be redacted to city and state in criminal cases only. This happens often in motions to suppress search and seizure and any supporting documents to the motion.
- Personal information put into the Position on Sentencing/Sentencing Memorandum documents is to be redacted. Examples include children's names (redacted to initials).
- Defendant's home address on the Notice of Appeal should be redacted. Any listing of home addresses, in criminal cases, need to be redacted to city and state in criminal cases.

**Sample of Personal Data Identifiers Redacted Document**

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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
DISTRICT OF MINNESOTA**

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*[Plaintiff's Name]*  
Plaintiff(s)

**REFERENCE LIST OF  
PERSONAL DATA IDENTIFIERS  
FILED UNDER SEAL PURSUANT TO THE  
Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2 and Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1**

v.

*[Defendant's Name]*  
Defendant(s)

Case Number: *[Case Number]*

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The following personal identifiers have been redacted pursuant to the Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2 and Fed. R. Crim. P. 49.1. Below is a listing of the complete personal data identifier and its corresponding partially redacted version. The redacted version will be used in lieu of, and shall be construed to refer to, the corresponding complete identifier in filings in the above referenced case.

Description of Data Redacted	Complete Identifier	Partially Redacted Identifier
Social Security Number	123-45-6789	XXX-XX-6789
Financial Account Number	987-66-54-321	XXX-XX-X4-321
Name of Minor Child	Jane Doe	J.D.
Date of Birth	07-04-2004	2004
Home Address (criminal cases only)	123 Main St Smithville, MN 12345	Smithville, MN

## Filing a Stipulation

When filing a stipulation in ECF, be sure the PDF document filed does not include a signature line for the Judge or a proposed order. All proposed orders are to the Judge's Chambers e-mail box. Also be sure you select all parties you are filing on behalf of.

1. Convert the stipulation to PDF.
2. Log into **ECF**, Click on the **Civil** menu choice.
3. Click on the **Other Documents** link located below the Other Filings heading.
4. Type in the **case number** and select the file. Click on **Next**.
5. Review the short case title to ensure you are filing in the correct case. Select the party(ies) you are filing on behalf of. (All of them. Use the mouse + control to select multiple parties) Once correct, click on the **Next** button.
6. **Important: because you are selecting the opposing party that you do not normally represent, you may be asked if you wish to be added as an attorney for the opposing party. Uncheck the box in front of the attorney's name to disassociate the attorney to the opposing party(ies).**
7. From the drop-down list provided, click on the **Stipulation or Stipulation of Dismissal** option. Click on the **Next** button.
8. A reminder text window appears regarding the language that should be omitted from the stipulation and the filing of the proposed order.
9. Click on the **Browse** button and navigate to the location of the PDF version of the Stipulation form. Select the document and click on **Open**. Click on the **Next** button.
10. The **Document Linking** window appears. If the stipulation is linked to another document such as a complaint; check the box provided. (You may also wish to enter the date the document(s) was filed or the document number that was given so that not all the documents appear to select from window.) If the checkbox is selected click on the **Next** button and the list of documents appears for selection. Select the document this filing is related to. Click on the **Next** button.
11. The **Docket Text** window appears. Type additional text in the box provided to describe what the stipulation is for. Click on the **Next** button.
12. Review the filing. If you are ready to file click on the **Next** button. The **Notice of Electronic Filing** appears.

## Scanning Tips

- Use 300dpi for scanning documents.
- Set image type to black and white bitmap, text (image only), or line art.
- Use black ink if possible. Blue ink and pencil do not scan well. If necessary, make a copy of the document before scanning it, and darken with the copy machine settings.
- Request depositions on floppy disk and convert them to PDF using a word processor.
- Use Adobe Acrobat Writer software on the scanning computer to simplify the scanning process. Scan documents directly into Adobe by clicking File...Import...Scan on the menu bar. (Note: you can still use pdfFactory on other computers to convert word processed documents)
- Check the size of a scanned document before uploading it to CM/ECF. The size limit is 15 MB or approximately 15,360 KB per document. To check the file size, locate the file in Windows Explorer, right click on the file and choose Properties.
- If a scanned document is larger than 15 MB, use Adobe Acrobat Writer to extract pages from the document to a separate file. Or use pdfFactory to print the pages to two separate files. This prevents re-scanning the document.

## Free Tools Just For You

### New Cases Report

The New Cases Report lists new civil and criminal cases filed in the U.S. District Court, District of Minnesota each day. It indicates the date and time (within the hour) the case was assigned, case number, case name, the District Judge assigned to the case, and the Magistrate Judge assigned to the case. The information will be available on the New Cases Report for 30 days. This report is designed to assist the public with viewing new case filings in the U.S. District Court. The Judge assignments in the New Cases Report are listed with their initials. Click on the Judge Initials link to view a listing of the Judge's initials and corresponding full names.

To access the New Cases Report click on the District of Minnesota's Web site at: [www.mnd.uscourts.gov](http://www.mnd.uscourts.gov). Click on the New Cases tab> Access to the New Cases Report.

### Written Opinions

Judges when posting orders and such to ECF have an option to mark a document as a "written opinion." By doing this, it makes the document available in the Written Opinions Report located in ECF in Reports. The entire report is "free" to view in ECF. If a judge has made a document a written opinion it will be noted that way in the docket text.

Written Opinions Report				
U.S. District Court – District of Minnesota				
Filed Report Period: 2/26/2006 - 3/31/2006				
Case Number & Name:	Date Filed:	Doc. #	Description:	Notes:
<a href="#">0:01-cv-00020-ADM-AJB Parker v. Osterberg</a>	03/28/2006	<a href="#">9</a>	ORDER (Written Opinion). Signed by Judge Ann D. Montgomery on 03/31/06. (admin, )	Office: DMN Case Flags: Rep Recommendation NOS: Contract C Cause: 30:1202 Reclamation Act
	03/28/2006	<a href="#">10</a>	ORDER (Written Opinion). Signed by Judge Ann D. Montgomery on 03/31/06. (admin, )	Office: DMN Case Flags: Rep Recommendation NOS: Contract C Cause: 30:1202 Reclamation Act
Total number of opinions reported: 2				

### Public Terminals

All four courthouses (Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, and Fergus Falls) have public terminals that allow researchers to locate electronic documents on ECF. If you wish to have documents printed, however, a copying fee is imposed.

### Court Announcements List

Want to keep track of changes to ECF, press releases, or other court news? Sign up for the Court Announcements List by selecting this as an option under your email address under Maintain Your Account>Email Information.