
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- What is CM/ECF?
- What is the cost for using CM/ECF?
- Who developed CM/ECF?
- How do I get help?
- How are electronic documents served?
- What am I charged for in CM/ECF?
- What constitutes a page in CM/ECF for PACER billing purposes?
- How do I get my free copy of newly filed documents?
- How do I start receiving email notices from CM/ECF?
- The electronic notice I received has a link to the docket sheet. Am I charged to view the docket sheet?
- If I leave my computer idle, will the CM/ECF system automatically log me out so others cannot use my computer to file documents?
- What if I make a mistake that must be corrected in the CM/ECF system?
- What do I do with documents that must have an original signature, e.g., affidavits or stipulations signed by the opposing counsel?

ACCESS RELATED

- Can any member of the public use CM/ECF to file documents with the court?
- What are the rules and procedures regarding filing electronically?
- My firm already has a PACER login and password. Do I need to establish a separate PACER account, or can I use the firm account?
- I am changing firms. Do I need to establish a new e-filing login and password?
- How do I change my address with the court?
- How do I change my CM/ECF password?
- Why do I get a second login screen after I've already logged into ECF?
- Why am I getting an invalid login message?
- Why do I get an invalid login message once I have already logged into the court and I am retrieving a docket or document?
- Why can I get a docket sheet, but not any of the documents provided?
- What should we do when an attorney leaves the firm?
- Can I have the same filing login for all courts I practice in?
- What do I do if I think an unauthorized person is filing documents using my login and password?
- How do I search for a word or phrase on a web page?

TECHNICAL – CM/ECF ISSUES

- What hardware and software will attorneys need to participate in CM/ECF?
- Why does my session freeze?
- Why can I not access a previous page viewed by clicking on the "Back" button on the browser after selecting a link?
- Why can't I view a document from an email notifying me that something was filed?
- If I forward an email notification I received to another individual will that individual be charged for viewing the document?
- How are technical failures handled?

TECHNICAL – ADOBE RELATED

- What is a PDF document?
- What is Adobe Acrobat?
- How do I make a PDF document with Adobe Acrobat?
- I tried to scan my document into PDF but a lot of errors appeared. Why?
- How do you start the Adobe Acrobat Reader program in order to view a PDF document on a website?
- Is the optimum way of viewing PDF files within Netscape Navigator or in a separate window?
- When I print an image from CM/ECF, the right edge gets cut off. What can I do?
- How do I copy a PDF text file to my word processor?
- What should I do if I'm having problems converting documents to PDF?

GENERAL

What is CM/ECF?

In January 1996, the Administrative Office of the United States Courts began development of the Case Management/Electronic Case Filing (CM/ECF) system. CM/ECF is a comprehensive case management system that will allow courts to maintain electronic case files and offer electronic filing over the Internet. Courts can make all case information immediately available electronically through the Internet. Eventually, CM/ECF will replace the current case management systems used by the federal courts across the country.

What is the cost for using CM/ECF?

There is no fee associated with the filing aspect of the CM/ECF system, and attorneys of record and parties in a case (including pro se litigants) receive one free electronic copy of all documents filed electronically, if receipt is required by law or directed by the filer. For access to Queries and Reports through the PACER system, the Judicial Conference of the United States, in 2004, approved an Internet access fee of \$.08 per page. This access fee will apply to information retrieved through the system for all users. No fee is owed until an account holder accrues charges of more than \$10 in a calendar year.

Who developed CM/ECF?

All software for the project has been developed by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

How do I get help?

Telephone the court's Help Desk between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P. M., Monday through Friday, if you need assistance.

Jackson, MS 1-866-517-7682

For help using PACER, visit the PACER Service Center web site at <http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov> or call (800) 676-6856 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Central Time.

How are electronic documents served?

The CM/ECF system generates a Notice of Electronic Filing -- an email message containing a hyperlink to the document filed -- whenever a document is filed with the court.

What am I charged for in CM/ECF?

Public users of the PACER system for access to CM/ECF are charged .08 cents per page for the results of searches on case specific information. Examples of case specific information are the docket sheet, the PDF copies of filed documents, and the cases report. Public users with a court-issued login are not charged for filing documents using CM/ECF. For information retrieved through PACER, there is a cap of \$2.10 (30 pages) for a single document; however, this cap does not apply to docket sheets or reports. Each attachment in CM/ECF is considered a separate document. Therefore the cap will apply to each attachment over 30 pages separately.

What constitutes a page in CM/ECF for PACER billings 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 in are 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 in each court site for reviewing charges. Also, Review Transaction History is available on this 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.

How do I get my free copy of newly filed documents?

Attorneys of record and parties in a case receive one free electronic copy of all documents filed electronically if receipt is required by law or directed by the filer. Attorneys will receive an email message containing a hyperlink to the document filed. Use the hyperlink to view the document. The hyperlink will expire after the earlier of these two events: the first use or 15 days. Any time that same hyperlink is accessed after it has expired, the user will be asked for a PACER login and will be charged to view the document. All users should be advised to print or save the document during the initial viewing period in order to avoid future charges.

How do I start receiving e-mail notices from CM/ECF?

Log into the CM/ECF system with your court-issued filing login. Your PACER login will not have sufficient privileges to access this information. Click on "Utilities". Click on "Maintain Your Account". On the screen titled Maintain User Account, click on "Email Information" at the bottom of the page. Enter your email address in the box for "Primary e-mail address". You can send additional notices to other email addresses by checking the box "to these additional addresses" and listing other email addresses in the box to the right. You can receive notices in other cases by checking the box "Send notices in these additional cases" and listing the case numbers in the box to the right. You can choose to receive an individual notice for each filing or

a summary notice with all the filings each day. Either the individual or the summary notice will contain hyperlinks back to the documents. You can choose to receive the email notices in HTML or text format. You should choose the format based on the type of e-mail program you use on your end. After completing the information requested on the screen, click on “Return to Account Screen”. Click on “Submit”. Then, click on “Submit” again. You should receive a confirmation message on the screen that your email preferences were successfully updated. Make sure you keep your email address current, so you don't miss notices.

The electronic notice I received has a link to the docket sheet. Am I charged to view the docket sheet?

The PACER fee is applied for accessing a docket sheet and any documents accessed from the link on the docket sheet.

If I leave my computer idle, will the CM/ECF system automatically log me out so others cannot use my computer to file documents?

Yes, the system will “time out” after approximately 30 minutes. However, the court recommends that you log out whenever you leave your computer.

What if I make a mistake that must be corrected in the CM/ECF system?

DO NOT TRY TO FILE A CORRECTED DOCUMENT YOURSELF. Please call (601) 965-4439 or our toll free help desk as soon as possible after an error is discovered. If after normal business hours, please leave a voice message and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

You will need to have the case number and document number for which the correction is being requested. If appropriate, the court will make an entry indicating that the document was filed in error. You will be advised if you need to re-file the document. The CM/ECF system will not permit you to change the misfiled document(s) or incorrect docket entry after the transaction has been accepted.

What do I do with documents that must have an original signature, e.g., affidavits, or stipulations signed by opposing counsel?

See the Attorney User Manual, Pages 13 - 14 for detailed information. In general, you will scan the original document to produce a PDF copy, file that document, and maintain the original copy at your office.

ACCESS RELATED

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 attorneys only. Authorization and training is provided by the United States District Court, Mississippi Southern. Call the court's Help Desk between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 4:00 P. M., Monday through Friday, to get information about training opportunities or check out our web site at www.mssd.uscourts.gov.

What are the rules and procedures regarding filing electronically?

See the CM/ECF Attorney Training Manual and the Administrative Procedures for rules and procedures for the Southern District of Mississippi.

My firm already has a PACER login and password. Do I need to establish a separate PACER account, or can I use the firm account?

The firm PACER account can be used for the query component of CM/ECF. However, if you would like to keep the billing separate from the firm's, you will need to establish a new PACER account.

I am changing firms. Do I need to establish a new e-filing login and password?

You do not need to register for CM/ECF more than once. Even if you change firms, your login remains valid. However, you must file a Notice of Change of Address with the court. Based on the information in your Notice, we will update your firm address in the system. It will also be necessary to establish a new PACER login and password.

How do I change my address with the court?

You will need to file a Notice of Change of Address with the court. Based on the information in your Notice, we will update your firm address in the system. You will also need to change the billing address for PACER.

How do I change my CM/ECF password?

1. Once logged in, go to “Utilities” on the dark blue tool bar.
2. Click on “Maintain Your Account” in the “Your Account” section.
3. Click on the “More User Information” button at the bottom of the screen.
4. Highlight the row of asterisks in the password box; type your new password in their place.
5. Click on “Return to Account screen” at the bottom of the page.
6. Click on “Submit” at the bottom of the page.

Why do I get a second login screen after I’ve already logged into CM/ECF?

This login prompt is requesting your PACER login and password, which is required whenever you request a report or document from a case. In order to bypass this login prompt in the future, click the box that says “make this my default login” after entering the PACER login and password. Your CM/ECF login and password will still need to be entered each time the ECF site is visited.

Why am I getting an invalid login message?

Look for a few of these common problems:

- Both the login and password should be entered in lower case letters.
- Make sure the proper login and password are being used for the proper database. (PACER login for querying; CM/ECF login for filing)
- Verify that the recommended browser is being used – Netscape Navigator version 4.7x or 7.0x, IE 5.5 or 6.0. The browser must be JavaScript-enabled.
- Check the location of the web site in the location window of Netscape.
- Netscape needs to be set to accept all cookies.

Why do I get an invalid login message once I have already logged into the court and I am retrieving a docket or document?

Verify that the recommended browser is being used (Netscape Navigator version 4.7x or 7.0x and/or IE 5.5 or 6.x). Make sure to set your PC to accept all cookies. If the problem persists, delete your existing cookie files. Cookies are stored within the Program Files of your computer. Once in Program Files, go into the browser folder. Within one of the folders will be a cookie file. To delete the cookie file, right click on the icon and select delete.

Why can I get a docket sheet, but not any of the documents provided?

If you are trying to get documents for criminal cases, only attorneys associated with the case can view the documents. Please note that documents filed before December 20, 2004, will not be available in CM/ECF and can only be viewed in the Clerk's Office. If neither of the above situations are true, this may occur if you are using an incompatible browser. Check your browser settings. Another problem may be that you do not have PDF reader software such as Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer. While you do not need PDF reader software to view a docket sheet, you do need one to view individual documents within a case. All documents in CM/ECF are in PDF format. You might have Acrobat PDF on your machine but have not connected it to your browser. The solution for Netscape--open Netscape: Options, General Preferences, and in the dialog box add application/pdf; extension .pdf and indicate the path to the Acrobat.exe file.

What should we do when an attorney leaves the firm?

Both the attorney and the firm need to consider the implications to the CM/ECF noticing system. If cases will move with the attorney, all the attorney needs to do is to change his/her e-mail notification set up and submit a change of address to the Clerk's Office. If cases will remain with the firm, the firm needs to ensure the court docket accurately reflects the proper attorney of record and the new attorney of record is properly set up to receive e-mail notification. Law firms may want to consider the best method of handling e-mail addressed to the firm for the departed attorney. Removing the attorney from the firm's e-mail system with no further action may result in notifications being missed. Firms need to consider whether their own e-mail systems should forward such e-mails to the attorney at his/her new address, or to another attorney within the firm.

Can I have the same filing login for all courts I practice in?

Since each court assigns the filing login for filing privileges in the CM/ECF system, it is not possible to obtain a universal filing login. However, some courts allow you to request a particular login and password when you register, so you may be able to use the same filer login for many courts.

What do I do if I think an unauthorized person is filing documents using my login and password?

Immediately change your password and notify the clerk's office at (601) 965-4439 or 1-866-517-7682.

How can I search for a word or phrase on a web page?

Once you select a document to review, you can perform a word search by clicking on EDIT, then clicking on either "Find and Replace," or "Find in Document" (or pressing Ctrl+F), and entering the word(s) you wish to locate in the document. For documents in PDF format (viewable using Adobe Acrobat Reader) search by clicking on "TOOLS," then "FIND" (or Ctrl+F), and proceed the same way. Note, if the PDF document is an image file, as opposed to a text file, searching

the document is not possible. As the name implies, a text file is one created in the first instance using a word processing, spreadsheet, or similar program, while an image file is created by scanning a document using a document scanner or fax machine

TECHNICAL -- CM/ECF ISSUES

What hardware and software will attorneys need to participate in CM/ECF?

Attorneys 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, Windows 95, Windows 98, or higher or a Macintosh.
- Internet service and a compatible browser (Netscape Navigator 4.7 or 7.0x and IE 5.5 or 6.x were the only browsers tested on CM/ECF. The browser must be JavaScript-enabled.).
- Software to convert documents from a word processor format to portable document format (PDF). Adobe Acrobat PDF Writer, as well as certain word processing programs can perform this function. For viewing documents, not authoring them, only Adobe Acrobat Reader is needed.
- A PDF-compatible word processor like Macintosh or Windows-based versions of WordPerfect and Word.
- A scanner to transmit documents that are not in your word processing system.

Why does my session freeze?

If you find your session freezing after you have hit "SUBMIT", try using the Back button to return to the previous screen and click on SUBMIT again. It may be the session has not really halted; this kind of misbehavior is common to browser-based applications

Why can I not access a previous page viewed by clicking on the "Back" button on the browser after selecting a link?

Unlike most programs, a web browser will open multiple windows. In other words, two or more windows in which the browser appears may be active at the same time. Look at the tool bar at the bottom of the screen, this is the same bar where the start button is located. If the browser logo appears on two different buttons, you have more than one window open. Click on the button that is not active (not highlighted) to open the previous window. If there is only one window open, click on the "GO" menu item at the very top of the screen; a drop down menu will appear where you can click on the address of the page to which you wish to return.

Why can't I view a document from an e-mail notifying me that something was filed?

Make sure your e-mail system is set to open links with the Internet browser. If you get a login screen when you request the document, make sure you enter your PACER login not your filing CM/ECF login id and password. The first time you view the linked document in an email notice, it will be free. Anytime after the first viewing, you will be charged to view the document. The document should be saved to your local hard drive during your first view.

If I forward an e-mail notification I received to another individual will that individual be charged for viewing the document?

The document within an email notification is accessed by a hyperlink. This hyperlink takes you to a site which will allow the first viewing to be free. The first individual to view the linked document will not be charged. If you forward the email notification without viewing the document, the recipient of the email will be able to view the document for free. Anytime after the first viewing, a charge will be incurred to view the document. The document should be saved to a local hard drive during the first viewing.

How are technical failures handled?

- If the failure is with the court's system:
The Clerk shall deem the public website for the Southern District of Mississippi to be subject to a technical failure on a given day if the site is unable to accept filings continuously or intermittently over the course of any period of time greater than one hour after 12:00 noon that day, in which case filings shall be rejected unless accompanied by a declaration or affidavit attesting to the filing person's failed attempts to file electronically at least two times after 12:00 p.m. separated by at least one hour on each day of delay due to such technical failure. Questions about CM/CM/ECF may be directed to our Help Line between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. local time.
- If the failure is with the attorney's system:
If the attorney is unable to file a document in a timely manner due to technical difficulties in the user's system, the attorney must file a document with the court as soon as possible notifying the court of the inability to file the document.

TECHNICAL - ADOBE RELATED

What is a PDF document?

Documents in Portable Document File (PDF) format do not require a copy of the word processing program used to create them in order to be viewed. They can be viewed by anyone with a free Acrobat Reader, a product of Adobe Systems, Inc. In addition to its cross platform advantage, a PDF document matches very closely the format of the original document in which the PDF document was created. All of the pleadings in the CM/ECF system are stored in PDF format. To view PDF files, you must have a copy of Acrobat Reader software, which you may download free from the Adobe Systems Internet website <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>. You will view PDF documents the way they were created, and you may save and print them in that format.

What is Adobe Acrobat?

Adobe Acrobat is a commercial software product from Adobe that allows you to save documents in PDF (portable document format). All documents filed in CM/ECF must be in PDF format. .

How do I make a PDF document with Adobe Acrobat?

After creating a saving your new document to your word processing software, selecting "File"/"Print" and then select your PDF printer as the current printer. Make sure that you save your PDF document in the correct folder and with the correct name. Click OK. The file will be created with a .pdf extension. In doing this, you are not actually printing your document to a printer; instead you are saving it to a file. To print a physical copy of the document, open the newly-created .pdf file and print to your local printer. Always print from this PDF file, rather than the word-processed file that created it to ensure that the paper and electronic versions are consistent.

I tried to scan my documents into PDF but a lot of errors appeared. Why?

You are probably trying to scan the document using optical character recognition (OCR)--don't do this. PDF can handle both text and scanned documents. It can also take scanned documents and perform OCR on them, turning the image back into editable text. However, this process has many problems and should not be done before e-filing them. It is permissible to perform OCR on PDF documents after they are in the e-filing system, since any OCR errors will not be placed in the official documents at the court.

How do you start the Adobe Acrobat Reader program in order to view a PDF document on a website?

Adobe Acrobat Reader is a plugin that Netscape or Internet Explorer will automatically launch when you try to access a document stored in PDF format. If you do not have the Adobe Reader, your computer will show you a set of applications from which to choose a program that will read the file. None of them will work, which is why you must download the Adobe Reader. To download a free copy of Acrobat Reader go to

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html> and click on the link.

Is the optimum way of viewing PDF files within Netscape Navigator/Internet Explorer or in a separate window?

This is more of a matter of personal preference. Some of the functionality of the Reader is lost when the PDF document is opened in a browser window. For example, in the browser window, you do not have the Adobe Reader menu line and cannot use control + various keys to operate the Reader software. Additionally, direct connection to Adobe's online help is not available when the Reader opens within the browser. Nonetheless, most of the functions accessible either using the menu or shortcuts when the Reader opens in its own window can be accessed using the various button icons that remain available when the Reader is opened within the browser. To save a PDF file opened in the browser window, click on the browser file menu at the top of the screen and then on "Save Frame As."

When I print an image from CM/ECF, the right edge gets cut off. What can I do?

After you click the print icon, click the 'shrink to fit' box on the printer setup screen. Once the setting has been changed, it should remain this way for all PDF documents.

How do I copy a PDF text file to my word processor?

If a PDF document contains text, as opposed to an image, you can select text and do a normal copy and paste. Using the Acrobat Reader, one can select no more than a page at a time. To copy a large text file in PDF format, it may be easier to use Adobe Acrobat to save the PDF document to a file. (If the Adobe Reader is embedded in Netscape so that it opens up within Netscape instead of a separate window, use the Save Frame option under File. You may also save a PDF document by right-clicking on the link to that document and then clicking on "Save Link As.").

After noting or choosing the directory in which you save the PDF file, open the document in Acrobat. Under "Edit", there is a menu pick called "Copy To Clipboard". Once the document is copied to the Windows Clipboard, open your word processing program and paste the document in a new document. You can select, copy and paste text in Acrobat, but you must first select the text tool (look for the T on the toolbar instead of the hand. Then select the text, and either right-click and choose copy, or use the Acrobat copy icon (to the left of the Text tool on the Acrobat toolbar.)

What should I do if I'm having problems converting documents to PDF?

If WordPerfect 5.1 or 7.0 is used to write the document, and the document is more than three pages, Adobe Acrobat will not convert all pages to the PDF format. The converted document will have missing pages. Use Adobe Exchange to ensure the integrity of the converted PDF document.

For additional Frequently Asked Questions, see our website:

www.mssd.uscourts.gov