

DO YOU "E" FILE?

By: Valerie A. Dolan, RP



If you work in litigation and/or bankruptcy, by now you should have heard of PDF, PACER and/or CM/ECF (Electronic Case Filing). If not, you are about to get a rude awakening! The world of litigation and bankruptcy is going paperless! If you never heard of the above terms, you and your office may not like the software requirements and computer upgrades that may be required to run these programs either. There always seems a price to pay for progress and technology.

Registration is now REQUIRED of all attorneys who practice in federal courts, both in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and Bankruptcy attorneys.

New Jersey Bankruptcy Court: www.njb.uscourts.gov

As of October 1, 2003, electronic filing became mandatory for all cases.

New Jersey Federal Court: www.njd.uscourts.gov

As of January 31, 2005, electronic filing is mandatory for all civil and criminal cases.

Pennsylvania Bankruptcy Court: www.paeb.uscourts.gov

As of January 15, 2005, electronic filing is mandatory and each attorney was required to register by December 15, 2004. If an attorney has not registered by December 15th, a waiver or an extension should be filed for that attorney immediately.

Pennsylvania Federal Court: www.paed.uscourts.gov

Philadelphia County Orphans' Court: www.courts.phila.gov

Effective January 1, 2005, electronic filing is discretionary and attorneys will be able to register online once the system becomes active. Beginning July 1, 2005, the electronic filing system will be mandatory for all attorneys.

Criminal cases and all cases involving minors: In order to protect an individual's privacy, attorneys should "refrain from including, or shall partially redact where inclusion is necessary, the following personal data identifiers from all documents filed with the court, including exhibits thereto, whether filed electronically or in paper, unless otherwise ordered by the court:

- a. *Social Security numbers.* If an individual's Social Security number must be included, only the last four digits of that number should be used.
- b. *Names of minor children.* If the involvement of a minor child must be mentioned, only the initials of the child should be used.
- c. *Dates of birth.* If an individual's date of birth must be included, only the year should be used.
- d. *Financial account numbers.* If financial account numbers are relevant, only the last four digits of the number should be used.
- e. *Home addresses.* If a home address must be included, only the city and state should be listed."

Please consult with each of the various courts and their individual websites for further information, forms and training information.

I believe that this is a great opportunity for each paralegal to be trained for each of these transactions so that they become an invaluable part of their "team." I have been to each of the training classes offered (with the exception of Orphans' Court) and it was my job to come back to the office, write out the instructions and train the other employees so that everyone knows how to "E" file in my firm. I am also listed as the employee (besides the filing attorney) that will receive notice of filings and the documents themselves and am responsible for making sure that this information is printed and given to that attorney. So, if you are in a "rut" and are looking for more responsibilities and a chance to branch out of your daily routine, I suggest making yourself available with the required information and volunteering to learn the various systems and report back to the office.

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