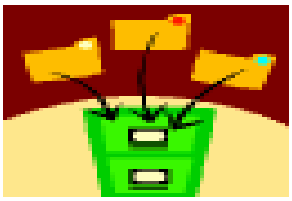
COURT TECHNOLOGY

The Office of the Clerk of Court of the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania offers the following services, providing attorneys, parties, and the general public with convenient and inexpensive access to court equipment and court records.

Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER)



The PACER system allows any member of the bar or the public who has access to a computer and a modem to obtain civil and criminal docket records via a toll-free telephone number. Information about setting up an account can be accessed through this District's web site, www. pawd.uscourts.gov under Other Judicial Sites.

Users can obtain a complete electronic history of all cases contained within the Civil/Criminal Docketing system. (This includes a complete case for Civil cases newly filed after May 1, 1992. If a Civil case was pending on May 1, 1992, a partial record was entered. All entries after May 1, 1992 are complete for these Civil cases. Criminal cases newly filed after June 1, 1994 are included.) The fee for accessing PACER is $.60 per minute and $.07 per printed page. This fee is controlled by an Act of Congress.

FAX Request for Document Copies and/or Searches

Fax requests are accepted from law firms, legal agencies, or the public for the following information:

1) copies of docket sheets (case information);
2) copies of documents filed in a case;
3) name searches for civil, criminal and miscellaneous records. The search requests require a $26.00 fee along with the request.

NOTE: PLEADINGS MAY NOT BE FILED BY FAX WITHOUT PRIOR COURT APPROVAL

Credit Card Payment

Law firms, legal agencies, or companies can arrange to use a Visa or MasterCard when making payment for filing fees and other district court related expenses. This type of payment provides an alternative to cash or checks.

This type of payment does not apply to copy requests. The copy service is provided by an independent contractor.

Video Magnification System

Magnification equipment is available in all divisional offices to aid the visually impaired in seeing files and other documents. It is available through the Clerk's Office to the public, and any witness who may need it.

Contact the judge's courtrooom deputy to request a demonstration or to use this equipment.

Website

The District Court offers a web site (www.pawd.uscourts.gov) which offers links to other areas, covering all aspects of the Western District. These include Court Notices, General Information about the Western District and its branch offices, Public Information and Court Reference Material, Documents that are used by members of the bar and the public, Other Judiciary Sites of Interest, and maps of Pennsylvania and the Circuits of the Federal Court system.

COURTROOM TECHNOLOGY

Courtroom 11 on the 10th Floor of the U. S. Courthouse is equipped with some of the latest examples of electronic equipment, designed to make courtroom presentations more effective and efficient.

This equipment allows presentations of animated evidence, freeze frame of videos, and live video presentations of witnesses who cannot be physically present in our building for trial. Power Point presentations can be loaded by connecting into the courtroom equipment. A logical presentation can have a powerful impact by projecting images through monitors to everyone in the courtroom.

Video Conferencing

When testimony is required from an absent witness, with prior approval of the presiding judge, a video conference can be scheduled. This live testimony can be transmitted throughout the monitors of Courtroom 10. This aids in providing jurors and judges with visual evidence as well as written evidence. Documents can be transmitted during the testimony, further emphasizing desired points of the testimony.

All courtrooms in the courthouse are equipped to do video conferencing. The court has one roll-about unit that can be used for video conferencing. This requires prior approval of the presiding judge and scheduling with the Automation group.

Mark Marinch is the contact person for the scheduling of a video conference. He can be contacted at 412-208-7554.

Visual Evidence Presentation

Evidence can be presented through the use of a document camera, working as an overhead/opaque projector. The image of a document, xray, or physical evidence can instantly be transmitted throughout the 5 monitors connected in the courtroom. Everyone in the courtroom will now have the same perspective of evidence, including three-dimensional objects. Negative or positive images, including xrays can be comfortably viewed.

Members of the Judges' staffs have been trained on the use of this equipment. The use of this equipment should be scheduled in advance through the courtroom deputy. It is available for use in every courtroom.

Whiteboard

While presenting evidence or arguments, easels are often used to illustrate points. These bulky sheets may later be admitted into evidence and become part of deliberations. With the electronic whiteboard, up to 4 screens can be stored. Each screen can be printed and copies can be distributed to the jury and/or judge for their use.

The court staff have been trained in its use. Trial personnel can quickly learn to make use of its features in presenting figures or charts.