

NEWS FROM U.S. DISTRICT COURT

July 10, 2020

Jury Trials Resume: Criminal jury trials resumed this week in Aberdeen and Pierre, albeit with some significant changes to reduce exposure to COVID-19. Among other things, the reporting times for petit jurors have been staggered to decrease congestion at security checkpoints and public elevators and jurors have been assigned physically distanced seating in courtrooms and jury deliberation rooms. In smaller courtrooms, members of the public are observing courtroom proceedings via a video feed in another room in order to reduce the number of people in the courtroom. Due to pressure on public restrooms, water fountains, and elevator occupancy limits, breaks during trial may be extended longer than usual.

The next time you are in court, you may notice some physical changes. The main courtroom in some locations has been reconfigured to maintain physical distancing. In addition, Plexiglass barriers have been installed at witness stands and in other areas. Finally, we purchased new equipment so bench conferences can be held without counsel having to approach the bench.

Grand Jury Resumes: After a three-month hiatus, grand jury proceedings have resumed in some locations. Many of the precautions we are taking regarding petit jurors are also being taken to ensure the health and safety of grand jurors.

Video Hearings: Although some hearings are being held in-person, most hearings continue to be held by video or teleconference, especially if a defendant is in custody. See [Renewed Standing Order 20-05](#) for more information. If you have any questions about an upcoming hearing or video hearing, please contact the Clerk's Office.