

NEWS FROM U.S. DISTRICT COURT

April 10, 2020

Judiciary Response to COVID-19: Life has changed for all of us as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the changes affecting court operations were outlined in the March 18, 2020, special edition of this newsletter. Other changes are more recent.

Standing Order 20-03 Amended: On April 8, 2020, Chief Judge Lange entered First Amended Standing Order 20-03. The amended order extends from April 24, 2020, until July 6, 2020, the continuation of all civil and criminal jury trials and grand jury proceedings, and tolls the 30-day time period for filing an indictment or information on the grounds that the ends of justice served by taking such action outweigh the best interests of the public and any defendant's right to a speedy trial. For more information, see [First Amended Standing Order 20-03](#).

Cash Payments: Effective March 31, 2020, the Clerk's Office can no longer accept cash payments. We continue to accept credit card payments, checks, and money orders.

Videoconference Change of Plea and Sentencing Hearings: As you may have heard, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides a mechanism for change of plea and sentencing hearings to be conducted by videoconference if the interests of justice require and the defendant consents. On March 31, 2020, Chief Judge Lange entered Standing Order 20-05. This new Standing Order provides the presiding judge with flexibility to conduct hearings by videoconference (or telephone when videoconference is not available) when the defendant consents after consultation with counsel and when the interests of justice and public safety require an alternative to an in-person hearing. For more information, see [Standing Order 20-05](#).

Tips for Telephonic Appearances: With increased use of telephonic hearings, our judges and court reporters are asking for your help.

Following is some guidance for telephonic appearances at hearings. Some of this guidance may also be helpful for video hearings. We ask that you follow this guidance to ensure an accurate transcript and to assist the judges in hearing and understanding what is said during a telephonic hearing.

1. Use a landline telephone whenever possible.
2. Do not use a speakerphone. This creates an echo which makes it harder to hear.
3. Do not use a voice-activated system because it can cut off words. If you have a voice-activated landline telephone, use a cell phone instead.
4. Wear a headset if you need your hands free.
5. Please join the conference call five minutes before a hearing is scheduled to begin for a sound check
6. In multiple-attorney cases, let the court reporter know ahead of time who will be speaking during the hearing.
7. If multiple attorneys from the same law firm are appearing, they each need to be on a separate phone line
8. Identify all parties present before the hearing begins, even if they do not intend to speak.
9. Introduce yourself before you begin speaking; for example, "This is Sam Smith. Thank you, Your Honor, for allowing me to appear by telephone . . ."
10. Identify yourself each time you speak; not just the first time. The court reporter does not know your voice.

11. Only one person should speak at a time.
12. Speak directly into the telephone's microphone.
13. Mute the telephone when you are not speaking. This cuts down on the rustling of papers and heavy breathing. Don't forget to unmute your phone when it is your turn to speak.
14. Spell proper names and case citations. Be mindful of numbers, letters, and contractions.
Examples: "16" and "60." "V," "D," and "B." "F" and "S." "Did" and "didn't."
15. Speak slowly and distinctly. If the court reporter stops you, find out where the court reporter left off before you start up again.
16. If you hear a beep or musical chimes, that usually means someone has joined or left the conference call. Identify yourself before leaving or upon entering the conference call. The judge may confirm the court reporter is still on the line whenever someone joins or leaves the conference call.