

## THIRD DISTRICT COURT OF APPEALS LOCAL RULES

The procedures prescribed by this local rule apply in lieu of those prescribed by the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure to the extent there are differences between the procedures; otherwise, the Rules of Appellate Procedure continue to apply with full force and effect.

### Local Rule 3. Electronic Filings of Documents.

- (a) **Electronic filing permitted.** A party may electronically file (e-file ) any document that may be filed with the court in paper form, except a document under seal or subject to a motion to seal.
- (b) **E-filing mechanism.** E-filing must be done through Texas.gov, the portal established by the Texas Legislature. Directions for its use may be found on its website. This is a summary. A person must first register with an Electronic Filing Service Provider (EFSP). A list of approved EFSPs is on the Texas.gov website. The EFSP will provide the registrant with a confidential, secure username and password to use when e-filing a document. This username and password will also function as a signature on each e-filed document, and will authorize payment of all filing fees and service fees. A document to be e-filed must be transmitted to the EFSP, which will send the document to Texas.gov, which in turn will send the document to the clerk. The e-filer will receive by email an immediate acknowledgment of the e-filing, a confirmation of the clerk's acceptance of the filing, and a file-stamped copy of the document. Fees charged by Texas.gov for the e-filing of a document are in addition to any filing fees and are costs of court.
- (c) **Electronic service.** A party who has registered to e-file documents through an EFSP may electronically serve (e-serve) documents through that EFSP on any other party who has consented to e-service by registering for the e-service option with an EFSP or by setting up a complimentary account with Texas.gov. Directions may be found on the Texas.gov website.
  - (1) Service through an EFSP is complete on transmission to the e-served person's EFSP or complimentary Texas.gov account. The e-filer's EFSP will send proof of service to the e-filer. Fees that an EFSP charges for e-service are not costs of court.
  - (2) If an e-filer must serve a copy of a document on a party who has not consented to e-service, the e-filer must comply with the service requirements in Texas Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.5 and, on the same day the document is e-filed, must send the document to:
    - (A) the party's lead counsel by email if the e-filer has an email address for the lead counsel; or
    - (B) if the party is not represented by counsel, to the party by email if the e-filer has the party's email address.

(d) **Redaction of information in e-filed document.**

- (1) Unless the court orders otherwise, an e-filed document must not contain a social security number; a birth date; a home address; the name of any person who was a minor when the underlying suit was filed; a driver's license number, passport number, tax identification number, or similar government-issued personal identification number; or a bank account number, credit card number, or other financial account number. The e-filer must redact all of this information in accordance with the redaction guidelines posted by the Supreme Court's Clerk on the Supreme Court's website; however, the e-filed document may contain a reference to this information as long as the reference does not include any part of the actual information (e.g., "passport number"). For good cause, the court may order redaction of additional information.
- (2) The e-filing of a document constitutes a certification by all attorneys of record for the party filing the document that the document complies with paragraph (1) of this rule.
- (3) If an e-filer believes any information described in paragraph (1) of this rule is essential to an e-filed document or that the e-filed document would be confusing without the information, the e-filer may submit the information to the court in a reference list that is in paper form and under seal. The reference list must specify an appropriate identifier that corresponds uniquely to each item listed. Any reference in the e-filed document to a listed identifier will be construed to refer to the corresponding item of information. If the e-filer provides a reference list pursuant to this rule, the front page of the e-filed document must indicate that the reference list has been, or will be, provided.
- (4) On its own initiative, the court may order a sealed reference list in any case. The court may also order that a document be filed under seal in paper form, without redaction. The court may later unseal the document or order the filer to provide a redacted version of the document for the public record.

(e) **Format of e-filed document.** An e-filed document must be formatted as follows:

- (1) An e-filed document must be formatted in accordance with Texas Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.4(b)–(e). The "paper" requirements in Rule 9.4(b)–(c) apply equally to a "page" of the e-filed document.
- (2) An e-filed document must be in text-searchable portable document format (PDF) compatible with the latest version of Adobe Reader. An EFSP will convert each e-filed document from its original form into a PDF file that complies with this rule.

- (3) Records filed in original proceedings and appendix materials may be scanned if necessary, but scanning creates larger file sizes with images of lesser quality and should be avoided when possible. An appendix must be combined into one computer file with the document it is associated with, unless the resulting computer file would exceed Texas.gov's size limits for the document. If a record filed in an original proceeding or an appendix contains more than one item, it should include a table of contents and either bookmarks to assist in locating each item or separator pages with the title of the item immediately following and any number or letter associated with the item in the table of contents.
- (4) A scanned document must be made searchable using optical-character-recognition software, such as Adobe Acrobat, and have a resolution of 300 dots per inch (dpi).
- (5) An e-filed document may contain hyperlinks to another part of the same document, an external source cited in the document, an appendix item associated with the document, an embedded case, or a record cite. Hyperlinks within an appendix item are also permitted.
- (6) An e-filed document must not contain a virus or malware. The e-filing of a document constitutes a certification by the e-filer that the document has been checked for viruses and malware.
- (7) The court may strike an e-filed document for nonconformance with this rule.

(f) **Signatures on e-filed documents.**

- (1) Except as otherwise provided by this rule, the confidential, secure username and password that the e-filer must use to e-file a document constitute the e-filer's signature on the document, in compliance with signature requirements in the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure. When a signature is provided in this manner, the e-filer must also include either an "/s/" and the e-filer's name typed in the space where the e-filer's signature would otherwise appear or an electronic image of the e-filer's signature, which may take the form of a public key-based digital signature or a scanned image of the e-filer's signature. The e-filer must not allow the e-filer's username or password to be used by anyone other than an agent who is authorized by the e-filer.
- (2) If a document must be notarized, sworn to, or made under oath, the e-filer must e-file the document as a scanned image containing the necessary signature(s).
- (3) If a document requires the signature of an opposing party, the e-filer must e-file the document as a scanned image containing the opposing party's signature.

- (4) When an e-filer e-files a scanned image of a document pursuant to paragraph (2) or (3) of this rule, the e-filer must retain the original document from which the scanned image was made until the case in which the document was filed is resolved. If the original document is in another party's possession, that party must retain the original document until the case in which the document was filed is resolved.
  - (5) If an e-served document was also e-filed and the person who completes a certificate of service under Texas Rule of Appellate Procedure 9.5(e) is different from the person who e-filed the document, the person who completes the certificate of service must sign the certificate by including either an "/s/" and his or her name typed in the space where his or her signature would otherwise appear or an electronic image of his or her signature.
- (g) **Time of e-filing.** A document will be considered filed timely if it is e-filed at any time before midnight (in the court's time zone) on the date on which the document is due.
- (1) An e-filed document is deemed filed when the e-filer transmits the document to the e-filer's EFSP, unless the document is transmitted on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday or requires a motion and an order allowing its filing.
  - (2) If a document is transmitted on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, it will be deemed filed on the next day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday.
  - (3) If a document requires a motion and an order allowing its filing, it will be deemed filed on the date the motion is granted.
  - (4) If an e-filed document is untimely due to a technical failure or a system outage, the e-filer may seek appropriate relief from the court.
- (h) **Paper copies.** An e-filer must file 11 paper copies of an e-filed petition for discretionary review and 3 paper copies of any other e-filed document in accordance with Rule 9 of the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure within one business day after the document is e-filed.

If a party opts not to e-file a document and to file the document in paper form instead, the original document filed with the court must be in the form provided by Rule 9.4 of the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure. However, one of the copies must be unbound and one-sided and contain no hard covers, tabs, or any other item that would impede the scanning of the document. In lieu of tabs, separator pages with the title of the item immediately following should be used.

- (i) **Email address requirements and communications with the clerk.** An e-filed document must include the e-filer's email address, in addition to any other information required by the Texas Rules of Appellate Procedure. If the e-filer's email address changes, the e-filer must provide the clerk and the e-filer's EFSP with the new email address within one business day of the change. If there is a change in the email address of a party who has consented to receive e-service, the party must provide Texas.gov or, if applicable, the party's EFSP with the new email address within one business day of the change. The clerk may send notices or other communication about a case to an attorney's email address in lieu of mailing paper documents.
- (j) **Casemail registration.** Lead counsel must register for Casemail and follow the instructions for receiving notices for cases in which they represent a party.
- (k) **Construction of rules.** This rule must be liberally construed so as to avoid undue prejudice to any person who makes a good-faith effort to comply with requirements in this rule.