

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

At a regular term of the Supreme Court of Appeals continued and held at Charleston, Kanawha County, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of April, 2014 the following order was made and entered:

**IN RE: Establishment of Unified Electronic Filing System —  
Adoption of Amendments to the West Virginia Trial Court Rules, Rules of Civil  
Procedure and Rules of Criminal Procedure**

On a former day, to wit, November 7, 2013, the Court published for public comment proposed amendments to the West Virginia Trial Court Rules, Rules of Civil Procedure and Rules of Criminal Procedure for the establishment of a Unified Electronic Filing System Pilot Project. Comments were received from Wm. Richard McCune, Esq., William C. Thurman, Esq., Laurie C. Barbe, President, Defense Trial Counsel of West Virginia, and Courthouse News Services, by Ashley Pack, Esq. The Court reviewed and considered each of the comments. The Court expresses its gratitude to those who filed comments.

Thereafter, the Court proceeded to consider the proposed amendments to the rules. Upon consideration whereof, the Court is of opinion to and does hereby adopt the amendments to the West Virginia Trial Court Rules as set forth in the attached Rule 15A of the West Virginia Trial Court Rules, effective May 1, 2014. The attached Rule 15A, is entirely new and therefore strikethrough and underlining is not used.

Additionally, the Court does hereby adopt the amendments to the Rules of Civil Procedure and the Rules of Criminal Procedure, as set forth on the attachment hereto with underlining used to denote the additions to the rules.

A True Copy

Attest:

  
Edythe Nash Gaiser, Deputy Clerk of Court

**WEST VIRGINIA TRIAL COURT RULES  
FOR THE WEST VIRGINIA E-FILING PILOT PROJECT**

*To be inserted into West Virginia Trial Court Rules as Rule 15A*

**Rule 15A.01. Application.**

Trial Court Rule 15A, which may also be referred to as “E-Filing Pilot Rules,” shall govern electronic filing and service of documents and maintenance of case-related information in the circuit courts and family courts of West Virginia in those Actions selected for participation in the Pilot Program pursuant to Rule 15A.04 in any Action before a circuit court or family court in a Pilot County. This rule does not preclude future application of electronic filing and service in other types of actions. Trial Court Rule 15 governs electronic filing and service in certain Mass Litigation.

**Rule 15A.02. Definitions.**

“Action” Any civil matter, issue, or proceeding filed or pending before a circuit court or family court.

“Document” Any pleading, motion, notice, or other document intended to be filed in an Action.

“E-File Case” Any Action meeting the requirements of Rule 15A.04 in which Documents will be electronically filed and served.

“E-Filing Pilot Rules” This Trial Court Rule 15A.

“E-Filing Receipt” The electronic document generated by the E-Filing System upon proper filing of a Document electronically.

“E-Filing System” The electronic and information-technology infrastructure that supports electronic filing and service in the courts in West Virginia, as designated by the Supreme Court of Appeals.

“E-Filing System Provider” The entity that provides the E-Filing System and related support systems, as designated by the Supreme Court of Appeals.

“Notice of Electronic Filing” The electronic document generated and emailed to Users in an Action notifying Users when a Document is electronically filed.

“Pilot Project” The project to establish an e-filing pilot program in Pilot Counties directed by administrative order of the Supreme Court of Appeals.

“Pilot Counties” The counties specified by the Supreme Court of Appeals for participation in the Pilot Project.

“User” A person who is approved by the E-Filing System Provider to participate in the E-Filing System.

“User Identity” The unique electronic credentials generated and assigned to a User by the E-Filing System Provider.

**Rule 15A.03 Purpose.**

These E-Filing Pilot Rules are adopted to implement the Pilot Project in the Pilot Counties. These E-Filing Pilot Rules are intended, upon completion of the Pilot Project, to serve as the basis for changes in rules applying to electronic filing and service and are therefore matters of statewide concern. The Supreme Court of Appeals hereby adopts these E-Filing Pilot Rules effective May 1, 2014.

**Rule 15A.04. Selection of Cases for Participation in Pilot Program.**

Within the Pilot Counties, participation of Actions in the Pilot Project shall not be mandatory. Actions before circuit courts or family courts within Pilot Counties shall be subject to these E-Filing Pilot Rules by:

- (a) the party initiating the Action filing the Complaint via the E-Filing System, unless the judge presiding over the Action later orders that the Action proceed pursuant to traditional filing and service methods in other rules or statutes; or
- (b) the judge presiding over any Action, sua sponte or upon the motion of the party against whom the action is filed, entering an order designating the Action for E-Filing under these rules.

Circuit court judges and family court judges are encouraged to facilitate as much participation in the Pilot Project as practical in order to provide a sound basis for implementation of e-filing rules and procedures.

**Rule 15A.05. Integration with Other Rules.**

The filing and service of Documents in an E-File Case in accordance with these E-Filing Pilot Rules shall constitute compliance with the Rules of Civil Procedure and Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court governing filing and service. If a conflict exists between these E-Filing Pilot Rules and any other rules or statutes, the E-Filing Pilot Rules shall govern. All filings, whether electronic or paper, shall otherwise comply with the Rules of Civil Procedure, Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court and the Trial Court Rules.

**Rule 15A.06. Becoming an Authorized User; User Identities; Payment of Fees.**

The E-Filing System requires parties to complete training and become registered participants in order to file and serve, receive service, access, and use the system. Each participant shall register with the E-Filing System Provider, provide the information necessary to complete registration, and pay the fees billed by the E-Filing System Provider at rates approved by the Supreme Court of Appeals. Upon completion of the registration, the E-Filing System Provider shall issue a User Identity to the User.

**Rule 15A.07. User Responsibility to Maintain Up-to-Date Information.**

Users shall notify the E-Filing System Provider within 10 days of any change in firm name, delivery address, fax number or e-mail address. Participants who have set an e-mail notification preference are solely responsible for providing an accurate, up-to-date e-mail

address and for ensuring that the e-mail account is properly configured to receive Notices of Electronic Filing.

**Rule 15A.08. User Responsibility for Security.**

Each User is responsible for the confidentiality, security, and use of their User Identity. If a User becomes aware that a User Identity has become compromised, the User shall immediately notify the E-Filing System Provider and request a change in username, password, or profile information.

**Rule 15A.09. User Responsibility for Compliance with Rules.**

Use of a User Identity shall constitute:

- (a) an agreement by the User to comply with the E-Filing Pilot Rules and that any filings made under their User Identity will comply with the E-Filing Rules; and
- (b) an acknowledgement that the User's e-mail address is current, working, and capable of receiving Documents served electronically.

**Rule 15A.10. Use of User Identity by Others.**

A User shall not authorize anyone to e-file or serve on that User's behalf, other than an employee of their law firm or a service provider retained to assist in e-filing and service. No person shall utilize, or allow another person to utilize, the User Identity of another in connection with e-filing or service.

**Rule 15A.11. Signatures.**

Each Document shall be deemed to have been signed by the attorney, or by the party not represented by an attorney who authorized the filing, and shall bear a facsimile or typographical signature of such person, e.g. "/s/ Adam Attorney." Each Document e-filed by or on behalf of a party shall also include the address and telephone number of the attorney or unrepresented party filing such document. Attorneys shall also include their West Virginia State Bar Identification Number or a notation that the attorney has been admitted *pro hac vice*. The e-filing of a Document by a lawyer, or another under the authorization of a lawyer, signed in the manner described in this Rule shall constitute a signature of that lawyer under Rule 11(a) of the Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 11(a) of the Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court.

**Rule 15A.12. Authenticity.**

Documents filed electronically in accordance with these E-Filing Pilot Rules and accurate printouts of such documents shall be deemed authentic.

**Rule 15A.13. Preservation of Originals.**

Where original documents exist, the User shall retain originals of such original documents until five (5) years following the final disposition, including appeals, of an Action. When necessary, any court may order production of original documents.

**Rule 15A.14. Form of Document.**

All Documents must be in Portable Document Format (.pdf) and produced in a format and resolution that is legible. If a Document is unable to be converted to a .pdf file in a legible manner, or if a Document is unable to be converted to a .pdf format (audio recordings, videos, large maps, etc.), then the Document must be filed conventionally with the circuit clerk.

Except as described in these E-Filing Pilot Rules, all Documents filed electronically shall comply with other rules or statutes.

**Rule 15A.15. Title and Description of Document.**

All Documents filed electronically shall be appropriately titled and described by the User in the E-Filing System's system. Titles contain generic document types generated by the E-Filing System, and the User must select the appropriate title, e.g., Motion to Compel, Motion for Summary Judgment. Descriptions are inputted by Users into text fields, and the User must accurately describe the Document, e.g., Defendant Jane Doe's Motion for Summary Judgment on Count I of Plaintiff's Amended Complaint.

**Rule 15A.16. E-Filing Receipts; Effect of E-Filing; Date and Time of E-Filing.**

Once a Document is properly filed, the E-Filing System shall generate an E-Filing Receipt for that Document. A filing is not completed for the purposes of these E-filing Pilot Rules until the User making the filing has received the E-Filing Receipt. The Document shall be deemed filed with the circuit clerk in the Action on the date and time noted on the E-Filing Receipt. It is the responsibility of the User to check their online inbox to view e-filed documents. Courtesy e-mail notification of a filing shall not constitute service.

**Rule 15A.17. Complaint and Summons.**

Complaints or other initiating Documents filed electronically shall be filed with the Action number blank. The E-filing System will automatically assign an appropriate Action number upon completion of electronically filing the Complaint or other initiating Documents. Where required, Civil Case Information Sheets or other Case Information Sheets in an Action shall be completed and electronically filed by the User filing the initiating Document. Any Document initiating an Action by electronic filing shall include the appropriate summons or other process for issuance by the circuit clerk. The circuit clerk shall forthwith issue the original summons as directed by the User initiating the Action.

**Rule 15A.18. Electronic Service.**

Except where otherwise provided, every e-filed document shall be e-served. The E-Filing System shall generate a Notice of Electronic Filing and email it to the email address of record of the filing User and any parties who have appeared in the Action who are also Users of the E-Filing System. The Notice of Electronic Filing will include the Document filed as an attachment or a link to download the Document. Upon receipt of the Notice of Electronic Filing, service is complete and effective to those parties who are Users of the E-Filing System as of the date and time listed on the Notice of Electronic Filing and shall be considered service under Rule 5 of the Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 10 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court. Electronic service shall be treated the same as service by mail for purposes of the Rules of Civil Procedure and the Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court. It is the responsibility of the User to check their online inbox to view e-filed and served documents. Courtesy e-mail notification of a filing shall not constitute service.

**Rule 15A.19. Certificates of Service.**

The Notice of Electronic Filing does not constitute a valid Certificate of Service under the E-Filing Pilot Rules or the Rules of Civil Procedure or Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court. Where required by the Rules of Civil Procedure or Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court, a User making a filing on the E-Filing System must complete a Certificate of Service that complies with the Rules of Civil Procedure and Rules of Practice and

Procedure for Family Court and include it with any Document filed electronically, noting the manner in which each party was served.

**Rule 15A.20. Exceptions to Electronic Service.**

Documents required to be served in conformity with Rule 4, Rule 4.1, or Rule 45 of the Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 9(b) of the Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court or where personal service is otherwise required by rule or statute, including without limitation, complaint, new party amended complaint, or third-party complaint, summonses and subpoenas, may not be served pursuant to these E-Filing Pilot Rules and must instead be served in conformity with those rules or statutes.

**Rule 15A.21. Service to Parties who are not Users of the E-Filing System.**

A User making a filing on the E-Filing System must determine if any parties in the Action are not Users and therefore not capable of receiving electronic service. If any such non-User has appeared as a party in the Action, the User making an e-filing must provide service to the non-User using traditional service methods.

**Rule 15A.22. Unavailability of E-Filing System.**

If a party misses a filing deadline because of an inability to electronically file Documents based upon the unavailability of the E-Filing System, the party may submit the untimely Document, accompanied by a sworn declaration stating the reason for missing the deadline no later than 12:00 p.m. of the first day on which the circuit clerk's office is open for business following the original filing deadline.

**Rule 15A.23. Filing of Sealed Documents.**

A motion to seal documents shall be e-filed and served. However, any documents that are the subject of a motion to seal shall be filed with the court enclosed in sealed envelopes to be opened as directed by the court pursuant to Rule 26(c)(8) of the Rules of Civil Procedure or Rule 6 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court, and a copy of the documents that are the subject of the motion to seal shall be provided to the judge for review.

**Rule 15A.24. Private Information.**

Unless expressly required by law, Users shall not e-file any Document which is publicly available which contains any person's social security, employer taxpayer identification, drivers' license, state identification, passport, checking account, savings account, credit card, or debit card number, or personal identification (PIN) code or passwords. Redactions, where necessary, shall ensure complete privacy of the information. It shall be the sole responsibility of the User filing a Document to comply with this Rule. Neither the court nor the circuit clerk shall be responsible for reviewing Documents for compliance with this Rule.

**Rule 15A.25. Entry of Orders and Judgments; Notice thereof.**

Orders issued by the court shall bear a typographic signature and an official e-filing court stamp, and shall be e-filed and served. Non-Users shall be served in accordance with the Rules of Civil Procedure. The date of the official e-filing court stamp shall constitute the date of entry of the order. E-filed orders maintained as part of the electronic register of actions shall satisfy the requirements of Rule 77(d) of the Rules of Civil Procedure and Rule 5 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court. An electronic register of actions, with associated documents and filing receipts, shall be maintained as part of the E-Filing System and shall constitute the electronic docket and satisfy the requirements of Rule 79 of the Rules of Civil

Procedure and Rule 5 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure for Family Court. Documents that are e-filed constitute the official court record, and e-filed documents have the same force and effect as documents filed by traditional means and are deemed to be in compliance with Trial Court Rule 10.01.

**Rule 15A.26. Public Access to Court Records.**

The circuit clerk in the Pilot County where an E-File Case is pending shall make available to the general public access to the electronic docket, pleadings and other documents that are not sealed or otherwise confidential. Copies made from the electronic records shall be printed by the circuit clerk's office, and standard copying fees shall be charged.

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## Rules of Civil Procedure

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### Rule 79. Books and Records Kept by the Clerk and Entries Therein.

- (a) *Civil Docket.* - The clerk shall keep a book known as "civil docket" of such form and style as may be prescribed by the Supreme Court of Appeals, and shall enter therein each civil action to which these rules are made applicable. Actions shall be assigned consecutive file numbers. The file number of each action shall be noted on the folio of the docket whereon the first entry of the action is made. All papers filed with the clerk, all process issued and returns made therein, all appearance, orders, verdicts, and judgments shall be entered chronologically in the civil docket on the folio assigned to the action and shall be marked with its file number. These entries shall be brief but shall show the nature of each paper filed or writ issued and the substance of each order or judgment of the court and of the returns showing execution of process. The entry of an order or judgment shall show the date the entry is made. When in an action trial by jury has been properly demanded or ordered by the clerk shall note the word "jury" on the folio assigned to that action.
- (b) *Civil Judgments and orders.*- The clerk shall keep, in such form and manner as the Supreme Court of Appeals may prescribe, a correct copy of every final judgment or appealable order, or order affecting the title to or lien upon real or personal property, and any other order which the court may direct to be kept.
- (c) *Indices; calendars.*- Suitable indices of the civil docket and of every civil judgment and order shall be kept by the clerk under the direction of the court. There shall be prepared under the direction of the court calendars of all actions ready for trial, which shall be distinguish "jury actions from "court actions."
- (d) *Other books and record of the clerk.*- The clerk shall also keep such other books and record as may be required from time to time by the court or by the Supreme Court of Appeals.
- (e) *Recording by Digital or Other Images.*- The clerk may keep any and all records and documents, otherwise required by any provision of law to be recorded in a book as described above, in a microphotographic, digital, or other format which employs a process for image-storing of documents in a reduced size. The format must conform to the applicable policy approved by the Supreme Court Administrative Director.

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## Rules of Criminal Procedure

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### Rule 55. Records.

(a) The clerk of the circuit court and the clerk of the magistrate court shall keep records in criminal proceedings in such form as the Supreme Court of Appeals may prescribe. The clerk shall enter in the records each order or judgment of the court and the date such entry is made.

(b) Recording by Digital or Other Image. -- The clerk may keep any and all records and documents, otherwise required by any provision of law to be recorded in a book as described above, in a microphotographic, digital, or other format which employs a process for image-storing of documents in a reduced size. The format must conform to the applicable policy approved by the Supreme Court Administrative Director.