

**United States Bankruptcy Court  
Central District of California**

**Frequently Asked Questions for CM/ECF**

**General Questions**

**1. What is Electronic Case Filing (CM/ECF)?**

CM/ECF is a Case Management and Electronic Case Filing system that allows attorneys to electronically file petitions and other documents via the Internet. Case information, dockets and documents filed under CM/ECF may be accessed through the Internet with a PACER account.

**2. Is CM/ECF mandatory?**

Yes. Effective April 1, 2008, CM/ECF is mandatory for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Central District of California.

**3. What are the benefits of using CM/ECF?**

The benefits of using CM/ECF:

- Registered attorneys may electronically file documents with the Court, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Complete case information is immediately available to attorneys, parties and the general public via the Internet/PACER.
- The system will provide immediate e-mail notices to registered attorneys, who represent parties involved in a case, whenever a document is filed. To receive an electronic notice of filings, registered attorneys must maintain a valid e-mail account registered with the Court.
- The system will reduce the amount of resources required to store and retrieve files.
- Since CM/ECF is compatible with Internet standard software, there is minimal expense in using CM/ECF.

**4. Can the general public access CM/ECF to electronically file documents?**

No. Only registered attorneys are authorized to file in CM/ECF. However, the system is capable of accepting paper input from pro se filers and others as necessary. The Court converts all paper filings to electronic format by scanning and adding the scanned image into the CM/ECF system. The Court considers the electronic version of a document to be the original document.

**5. Can the general public view CM/ECF cases and the documents in those cases?**

Access to view cases and documents in CM/ECF is available to anyone with a PACER login and password. There are also computers available at the Court for those who do not have a PACER account.

**6. How are fees paid?**

CM/ECF allows filers to directly pay filings fees through CM/ECF using the U.S. Treasury Internet credit card service, Pay.Gov. Upon successful submission of a document requiring a filing fee, a window displays with the option to Pay Now or Continue Filing. If Pay Now is selected, the filer is prompted to select the items to be paid and to enter the pertinent credit card information. Upon successful processing of the credit card payment, the transaction receipt displays for printing. The payment receipt is also automatically entered onto the case docket and an email is automatically generated to the filer titled "Pay.Gov Payment Confirmation."

**7. Where can I find more information about paying fees online?**

Information is available on the Court's website at [www.cacb.uscourts.gov](http://www.cacb.uscourts.gov), click on **ECF Homepage > Registration/Training > Internet Payment Manual**. Information is also available at Pay.Gov.

**8. Can an attorney add new attorneys from their offices to the database?**

Only authorized court staff may add attorneys to the database as system users.

**9. What is a Notice of Electronic Filing?**

When a document is filed in CM/ECF, a Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) is automatically generated and e-mailed to the registered parties in the case. The NEF includes the text of the docket entry, the unique electronic document stamp, a list of the case participants receiving e-mail notification of the filing, and a hyperlink to the document(s) filed.

**10. How many times may I access a PDF document through the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF)?**

You may access the document the first time for free by clicking on the hyperlink. Once you've had a "Free Look," you may access the document again, however PACER fees will apply. The "Free Look" is available for 15 days from the date of the NEF. After 15 days it will be disabled.

**11. Will I be billed by PACER if I access a PDF document through the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) more than once?**

Yes. Users are encouraged to save the PDF document onto their firm's network drive or to the local hard drive for subsequent access.

**Registration and Training**

**12. Must all users attend a training session?**

Training is required for all trustees, attorneys, and limited filers unless they have already received training and a Login ID and Password in another bankruptcy court district.

**13. How do attorneys register for CM/ECF?**

Attorneys must first be admitted to practice in the District Court, Central District of California. In order to file documents electronically in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, attorneys, trustees, and limited filers must register online and either provide proof of proficiency in CM/ECF or complete an online training

course demonstrating proficiency in CM/ECF. Once registration is submitted, attorneys may review and complete the on-line Electronic Learning Modules. Upon completion of court-sponsored training and requisite training assignments, registrants will be provided with a Login ID and Password for CM/ECF. The attorney's authorized staff may be allowed to use the assigned Login ID and Password. Attorneys **cannot** knowingly permit a password to be used by anyone who does not have authorized access to the program.

To register, access the court's website at [www.cacb.uscourts.gov](http://www.cacb.uscourts.gov), click on **ECF Homepage > Registration/Training**.

- 14. Can my support staff (paralegal/assistant) use my login to file my documents electronically?**  
The attorney's authorized staff may be allowed to use the assigned Login ID and Password. Attorneys **cannot** knowingly permit a password to be used by anyone who does not have authorized access to the program.
- 15. What should I do when my support staff (paralegal/assistant) entrusted with my CM/ECF login information leave the firm or my employment?**  
Attorneys should immediately contact the ECF Help Desk to request a new CM/ECF password and login. It is important to coordinate this request with the termination date of the employee to ensure there is no possibility of your password/login being breached.
- 16. Can my support staff participate on on-line training?**  
Yes, attorneys and trustees' staff can review the on-line Electronic Learning Modules, however, they are not required to submit the quizzes to the court for review.
- 17. Can the Bankruptcy Court-issued login and password be used to submit electronic documents to the District Court or other Bankruptcy Courts outside of the Central District of California?**  
No. Each Court will issue a Login ID and Password to be used only in their Court.
- 18. Are there restrictions on who may file documents in CM/ECF?**  
Only registered attorneys, trustees and limited creditor filers are able to file documents electronically. However, anyone with PACER access may view a docket.
- 19. Are there separate logins and passwords for PACER and CM/ECF?**  
Yes. The system requires two separate Login IDs and Passwords. A PACER Login ID is required for querying cases and is provided by the PACER service center. A CM/ECF Login ID is required for attorneys to file documents electronically and is issued by the Bankruptcy Court.
- 20. In what format will the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) be when it is e-mailed to my office?**  
The NEF can be in one of two formats:
  - **HTML format:** allows the recipient to view the documents through a hyperlink. Most e-mail applications allow HTML format. HTML is the default selection.
  - or**
  - **Text Only format:** does not provide a hyperlink to documents. If text only format is selected, the pleading can only be viewed through the docket reports.

If you have selected one format and wish to change to another format, please send a request to the ECF Help Desk at: [ECF\\_Support@cacb.uscourts.gov](mailto:ECF_Support@cacb.uscourts.gov).

**21. I represent a plaintiff on an Adversary case, how do I opt out of receiving email notification on the lead Bankruptcy case?**

A new registrant may select to opt out of receiving electronic notification on the lead Bankruptcy case during the registration process for a CM/ECF login. Current CM/ECF Users may contact the ECF Help Desk and request their profile be updated with this information. **NOTE:** This election will stop all of the attorney's e-mail notices from the bankruptcy case, as long as the attorney has no involvement in the main case. This is a global decision and applies to all adversary proceedings where the attorney is involved. In other words, this option cannot be on a case by case basis.

**Technical Questions**

**22. What are the hardware/software requirements?**

For information regarding hardware and software requirements, go to [www.cacb.uscourts.gov](http://www.cacb.uscourts.gov), click on **ECF Homepage > Registration/Training**.

**23. What is a PDF?**

A Portable Document Format file (PDF) is an image of the pleading, which cannot be altered. PDF allows documents to be displayed and printed exactly as they looked to the original author. The Conversion to PDF enables you to attach the pleading to the docket event in CM/ECF.

**24. How do I convert a pleading to PDF format?**

You will need *Adobe Acrobat Writer* to convert a pleading to a PDF. *Adobe Acrobat* is a commercial software available from retailers.

You must have a PDF file available before filing in the CM/ECF system. For additional information on PDFs, go to [www.cacb.uscourts.gov](http://www.cacb.uscourts.gov), click on **ECF Homepage > Procedures and Rules > ECF Procedures**.

**25. I am having difficulty filing my document. How do I get assistance with this problem?**

Is it a PDF (Portable Document File)? Check the size of your document to make sure it does not exceed our file size limit of 5MB. If it does exceed the limit, try the following steps:

- **Check the dpi (dots per inch) settings on your scanner.** The recommended dpi is 200. If the setting is higher than 200, lower the setting and re-scan your document(s).
- **Is your document in color?** If so, the file size is probably too large. Check your scan settings. Change your scanner settings to Black and White; do not select Color or Photo setting. Your document must be scanned in Black and White only.

**Comment [v1]:** Integrated answer with question #48 because questions were similar.

- **Is the page size of your document standard letter size (8.5 x 11)?** If not, correct the scanner page size setting and re-scan your document(s).
- If, after following these steps, your file size remains larger than 5MB and it contains two or more pages, scan your documents in sections (example: pages 1-4 are one file and pages 5-8 are a second file). Your first file will be the main document and the additional file(s) will be attachments to your main document when filing it in CM/ECF.

**26. Why am I having problems with my CM/ECF login and password?**

Confirm the following:

- **Are you using the correct Login and Password?** There are separate passwords for PACER and CM/ECF. Please make sure you are using the correct Login and Password.
- **Are you in the correct website?** Please make sure you are using CM/ECF from [www.cacb.uscourts.gov](http://www.cacb.uscourts.gov).
- **Do you have Caps Lock on?** The Login and Password fields are case sensitive.
- If your Login and Password still do not work, please call the ECF Help Desk at (213) 894-2365.

**27. I don't like the login and password assigned by the court. Can I pick my own?**

You may change your password; however, for tracking purposes, the option to maintain the login ID is reserved to Court personnel.

**28. I am having trouble logging in. After I enter my login and password and then click on Login, a message appears stating I did not Logout the last time I used CM/ECF.**

Some common causes of the problem are:

- You may have closed your Internet browser without properly logging out of the CM/ECF system during your last session. After 30 minutes, though, you *will* be automatically logged out.
- Frequently, the Internet browser memory retains the login information at that site, and continues to assume you have a session open. This can often be corrected in Internet Explorer by clearing the cache. (See questions no. 29 and 30 for instructions on clearing the cache).

**29. What is a "Cache" and where is it located?**

Cache is a location on your computer hard drive where data is stored. When you search the Internet, your computer keeps track of every page you have visited and saves this information on your hard drive. If this file becomes large (i.e. many web pages have been searched), the result may be loss of data.

**30. How do I clear the Cache?**

On your Internet Explorer menu bar, select Tools>Internet Options. In the Internet Options dialog box, click the Delete Cookies, Delete Files, and Delete History buttons, and press OK. Try your Login again. Should you continue to have problems, call the ECF Help Desk at (213) 894-2365.

**31. I cannot view a PDF document when using the link in my summary e-mail or when using my PACER account. What is the problem?**

Try updating to the latest version of Adobe Reader. Also try downloading Critical Updates for ADOBE stream (KB870669) from the Windows Update Website.

**32. Are there any special instructions regarding AOL users?**

AOL currently does not support Netscape Navigator.

**33. Is Adobe Acrobat 6.0 compatible with CM/ECF?**

Yes, Adobe Acrobat 4.0 and higher is compatible with CM/ECF. Keep in mind Acrobat file sizes are heavily dependent on the Acrobat print settings and the word processing program. Acrobat 6.0 tends to create files that are too large (compared to files created with version 5). Fortunately, there are settings within version 6.0 and higher that may be used to decrease file size.

**34. Can I have my e-mails sent to more than one email address in my office?**

Yes. When you register, you may indicate additional e-mail addresses to be added to your account. You may also send a request for a secondary e-mail address to the ECF Help Desk at: [ECF\\_\\_Support@cacb.uscourts.gov](mailto:ECF__Support@cacb.uscourts.gov).

**35. How will emails come to my office under CM/ECF?**

E-mails regarding the documents filed can be sent to your e-mail account in two ways,

- **Detail:** The *detail* report is sent every time a document is entered on a case in which you are a participant.
- or**
- **Summary:** The *summary* report is sent once a day and contains a summary of all documents filed for the day. This is the default selection.

If you would like to change the way the e-mails are coming to your office, you may request the change through the ECF Help Desk at: [ECF\\_Support@cacb.uscourts.gov](mailto:ECF_Support@cacb.uscourts.gov).

**36. How do I know who will receive electronic notice of my document, and who should be served by regular mail?**

The information can be verified through the following steps:

- **Click** Utilities
- **Click** Mailings
- **Click** Mailing Info for a Case
- **Enter** the case number
- The information will be displayed for you

**37. I have tried to look at documents from my e-mail but the system won't allow me.**

Not every entry on a case docket will have a PDF attached. Some entries are text only and do not have a PDF document. Those entries contain sufficient text to describe the event.

**38. Will there be a notification when CM/ECF is down for maintenance?**

Yes. There will be a message placed on the CM/ECF login screen giving the date and approximate times the system will be down for maintenance. Also, registered users will receive e-mail notification of scheduled system maintenance.

- 39. Will an external user be able to access CM/ECF with WebTV?**  
The user will be able to log onto CM/ECF through WebTV, but they will not be able to access PDF files. The reason is that WebTV is a browser tool with little or no memory. Additional software, such as Adobe Acrobat Reader or word processing tools, cannot be installed on the WebTV box.
- 40. Is the system Secure Socket Layer (SSL) enabled?**  
Yes.
- 41. How many users can submit documents at once?**  
There is no fixed limit. However, response time may be reduced with an increased number of users.
- 42. How many people can view a case docket or document at one time?**  
There are no limitations for either function. However, when running reports, it is recommended that the reports be run before 9:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m. and the time frames be no more than one week at a time in order to reduce response time.
- 43. How is a filer identity authenticated?**  
Authentication is currently completed at Login. Each user is required to identify him or herself by presenting a valid combination of user name and password. Upon doing so, access to the site is granted.
- 44. How will signatures on documents be handled for documents filed electronically?**  
A document shall include a signature block with the Filer's name, complete address, telephone number, e-mail address, state bar registration number and firm affiliation (if applicable). The signature line shall contain /s/ and the name where the Filer's or User's signature would otherwise appear in a signed document.
- For more information regarding signatures, please refer to the Court Manual located on the Court's website at [www.cacb.uscourts.gov](http://www.cacb.uscourts.gov), click on **Forms/Rules/General Orders > Court Manual**.
- 45. Does CM/ECF check for duplicate filings when a user opens a case? In other words, when a party name is entered, will the system alert the user to other cases in which the filer appears?**  
The CM/ECF software does not automatically check for duplicate filings. However, you are encouraged to search the system when adding a participant to a case. A pick list is presented with the names of parties already in the database. This provides a limited comparison. In bankruptcy cases, the ability to search by social security number can assist in identifying duplicate filings.
- 46. Can CM/ECF accommodate recorded audio files (e.g. WAV files) as part of the case record?**  
At this time, No.

### **Procedural Questions**

**47. Is there a limit to the number of aliases a party can have?**

No.

**48. Will the creator of the docket entry be identified?**

Yes. All entries will be identified by the name of the person who filed the entry.

**49. How can I make sure I do not attach the wrong PDF file when I am filing a document?**

When you click on Browse to locate your file during the docketing process, highlight the filename, right-click and select "open" from the drop-down menu to open the PDF file. View the document and verify it is the correct PDF before you attach it to the docket event.

**NOTE: It is imperative each PDF file is opened and viewed prior to attachment.**

**50. How do I know when a document is deemed filed?**

The date and time of filing is displayed on the Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF).

**51. Where do I locate the Notice of Bankruptcy Case Filing?**

The Notice of Bankruptcy Case filing can access by clicking on **Query** from the CM/ECF menu bar (located at the top of your screen). Enter the case number and click on **Run Query**

**52. What happens if a document is filed in error?**

Contact the ECF Help Desk at (213) 894-2365 immediately after you discover an error has occurred. Incorrect entries or PDFs will not be deleted. Errors may be edited by court personnel only. Besides making the appropriate annotations, the Court may ask the participants to submit a withdrawal of document or amended pleading. Instances that affect the calendar entries and noticing will need to be re-docketed. A corrective entry by the Court may be required. An e-mail is generated whenever a corrective entry is made.

**53. What should an attorney do if the document they are filing is not listed in the pick list?**

It is possible for the document event to be located under a different menu. An easier way to search is by clicking on **Search** from the CM/ECF menu bar (located at the top of your screen). Enter the proper keyword and click the **Enter** key. A list of event codes is displayed as a hyperlink under the various menus. If the event code is not in the pick list, choose the event most closely describing the intent of the pleading. Use the generic docket code **only** if you are unable to find a close match.

**NOTE: Avoid using generic codes whenever possible.**

Suggestions regarding docket events should be directed to CM/ECF support at: [ECF\\_Support@cacb.uscourts.gov](mailto:ECF_Support@cacb.uscourts.gov). The Court will review these suggestions to determine the necessity of creating new events.

**54. Will the uploading of lengthy documents negatively affect the CM/ECF system? How long will it take to transmit/receive lengthy documents?**

A user uploading a large document in CM/ECF will not interfere with the access of other users. The system uses web-based technology which is designed to service a large number of users simultaneously.

The time it takes to transmit or receive a document primarily depends on the user's Internet Service Provider (ISP), modem speed, and the type of PDF file transmitted. CM/ECF will accept both text and imaged PDF files. Generally, the larger the file, the longer it will take to load. File limitations are in place to expedite the transmission. PDF documents may NOT exceed 5MB.

Text PDF files can be created using Microsoft Word. The imaged PDF file is created by scanning a paper document into a PDF format. Text files upload 15 to 20 times faster than image files due to their smaller file size. While this difference in speed is usually not noticeable in a one or two page document, the difference can be significant when a document exceeds 20 pages.

Attorneys may have extremely large exhibits (more than 50 pages). Documents containing more than 20 pages will take longer to upload – this is also true of PDF text documents.

**55. When a user files a pleading with the court, does the system automatically serve the other parties or does the user have to serve them? Do the other parties get notifications of filing or do they get the actual document?**

When a document is filed in CM/ECF, a Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) is automatically generated and e-mailed to the registered parties in the case. The NEF includes the text of the docket entry, the unique electronic document stamp, a list of the case participants receiving e-mail notification of the filing, and a hyperlink to the document(s) filed. If a party requiring service is not a registered user, that party will not receive the NEF, but will need service by regular mail.

**56. Will the CM/ECF system support scanned documents in color?**

The system does support scanned color documents; HOWEVER, color documents are considerably larger in file size than black-and-white documents, therefore, the Court will not accept color documents.

**57. If I have a member of my staff serve a document, and they have electronically signed the Proof of Service or Declaration, can that document still be filed under my login and password?**

A Certificate of Service or Declaration electronically signed by support staff and entered using the attorney's Login and Password will be accepted the Court.

**58. What should I do if I accidentally file a motion in the wrong case and the motion requires a fee? Will I be charged a second fee when it is filed in the correct case?**

Yes, you will be charged the second fee when the motion is filed in the correct case. The motion filed in the incorrect case can be withdrawn by filing a Withdrawal of Motion.

- 59. If I submit a creditor matrix in PDF format with the voluntary petition, is that sufficient?**  
No. In addition to submitting the creditors' matrix as the last documents to the petition PDF, the creditor matrix should also be uploaded into the database in text (.txt) format. Additional information regarding uploading a creditor matrix is available on the Court's web site at [www.cacb.uscourts.gov](http://www.cacb.uscourts.gov), click on **ECF Homepage > Procedures and Rules > ECF Procedures**.
- 60. What address should I enter in the CM/ECF system if the mailing address is different from the street address listed on the petition?**  
If the mailing address is different from the street address, you must use the STREET ADDRESS when entering the debtor information into CM/ECF. The street address is required in order to assign the proper venue. A member of the Court staff will adjust the address during the quality assurance process.
- 61. Should I file the Statement of Social Security form with the electronic petition?**  
The Statement of Social Security Number form must be filed separate from the petition using private event code(s) **Statement of Social Security Number(s) Form B21** or **Statement of Social Security Number(s) Form B21 (AMENDED STATEMENT)**. The Statement of Social Security Number form must contain original (holographic) signatures.
- 62. How does CM/ECF handle documents to be filed under seal?**  
Documents to be filed under seal are not to be filed electronically unless specifically authorized by the Court.
- 63. What documents should not be filed electronically?**  
Documents filed under seal; writs of execution; abstracts of judgments; applications for renewals of judgments; bonds; interpleader with attached checks.