Getting Started/Requirements/Preparation

1.1 Introduction

This manual provides instructions on how to use the Electronic Case Filing (ECF) system to file documents with the court, or to view and retrieve docket sheets and documents for all cases assigned to this system. Users should have a working knowledge of Internet browsers and Portable Document Format (PDF) software.

1.2 ECF Capabilities

The ECF system allows registered participants with Internet accounts and web browser software to perform the following functions:

- Access the court's web page
- View or download the most recent version of the User's Manual, Electronic Filing Rules, and Local Rules
- Self-train on a web-based ECF tutorial
- Practice entering pleadings into ECF using a training database that is similar to the official "live" ECF database
- Electronically file pleadings and documents in the actual "live" cases
- View official docket sheets and documents associated with cases
- View reports for cases that were filed electronically

1.3 Hardware and Software Specifications

The minimum hardware and software specifications to electronically file, view, and retrieve case documents are as follows:

- A personal computer with a Windows or Macintosh operating system with minimum memory of 256 Mb
- An Internet service provider with a transfer rate of 28.8 kb or preferably higher

- Access to electronic mail. It is the addressee's responsibility to configure his/her electronic mail account to accept delivery of court mail from *ilsd_nef@ilsd.uscourts.gov*.

- An Internet browser. Please refer to our website at http://www.ilsd.uscourts.gov/cm_ecf.html for supported browser versions

- Software, such as Adobe Acrobat or other PDF conversion software, to convert documents from word processing format to PDF

- A scanner to convert documents that are not in your word processing system to PDF

Note: This would be used for documents that cannot be produced electronically, such as photographs, insurance policies, and depositions excerpts. *(See Also Electronic Filing Rule 5)*

1.4 PACER Registration

(See Also Electronic Filing Rule 11)

ECF users must have a PACER account to view documents and utilize the Query and Report features of the ECF system. If you do not have a PACER login, contact the PACER Service Center at 1-800-676-6856 or 1-210-013-6440 to establish an account. You may also register for PACER online at www.pacer.psc.uscourts.gov.

1.5 ECF Registration

(See Also Electronic Filing Rules 1 and 2)

Participants must register with the court to receive a login and password for the ECF system. Registration forms can be obtained on our website at www.ilsd.uscourts.gov/cm_ecf.html or by calling the court at 1-866-867-3169 or 1-866-222-2104. *See* Appendix A.

Completed registration forms should be submitted online or mailed to:

U. S. District Court - Southern District of Illinois
Attn: ECF Attorney Registration
P. O. Box 249
East St. Louis, Illinois 62202

After an account has been established, the participant will be issued a login and password.

Registered users can request access to a training version of the system on the Internet at https://ecf-train.ilsd.uscourts.gov to practice ECF activities and to check the ECF training schedule. We strongly recommend that registered users obtain ECF training or practice in the "training" ECF database before filing documents in the "live" ECF database. Requests can be e-mailed to: ecfhelp@ilsd.uscourts.gov.

Note: *Pro se* filers must seek leave to file electronically on a case-by-case basis.

1.6 Checking/Viewing the Transaction Log

Viewing the transaction log from the **Utilities** Menu allows for the review of all transactions ECF has processed with your login and password (*see* Figure 1.6). If you believe or suspect someone is using your login and password without permission, change your password *immediately*. Then telephone the court's Help Desk at 1-866-867-3169 as soon as possible.

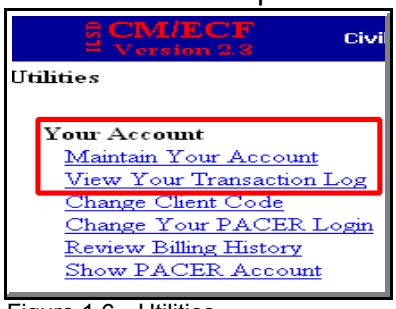


Figure 1.6 - Utilities

1.7 User's Manual

The most recent version of the User's Manual is always available at www.ilsd.uscourts.gov/cm_ecf.html in PDF. At this location we will announce scheduled service outages, changes to policies, etc. Separate web pages are available for each of the judges of the district on the court's website at

www.ilsd.uscourts.gov and should be consulted frequently for any updates regarding a particular judge's policies and practices.

1.8 Conventions Used in this Manual

- Data to be entered by the user is shown enclosed in angled brackets: <data to be entered>
- Command buttons are represented in the manual in **[bracketed boldface]** or graphics
- Hyperlinks are represented in **underlined boldface type**
- ✎ Indicates navigational tips within ECF

1.9 Portable Document Format (PDF)

Only PDF documents may be filed with the court using the ECF system. Before sending a document to the court, users should preview the PDF document to ensure it appears in its entirety and in the proper format.

1.10 How to Convert Document to PDF

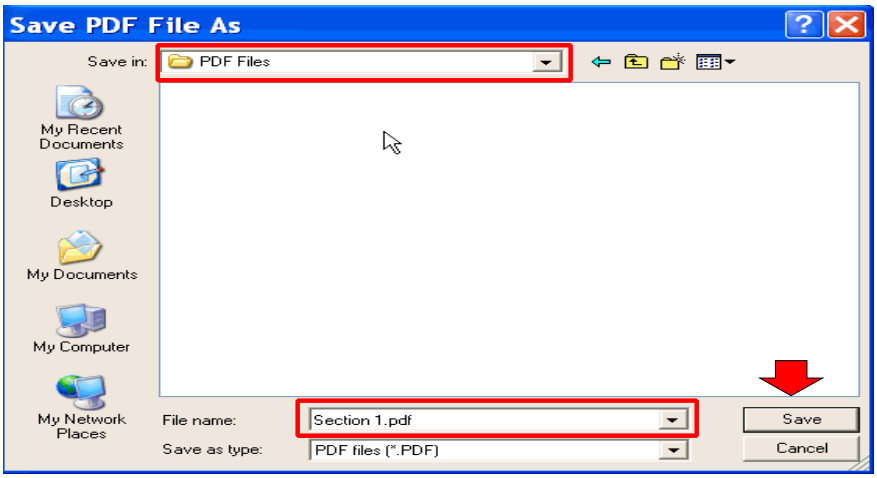
All documents **must** be converted to PDF **before** submitting them to the court's ECF system. The conversion process requires software such as Adobe Acrobat versions 4.0 or above. There are various software applications capable of PDF conversion. WordPerfect 9 or later has the conversion capability built into the software.

Using Most Word Processing Programs

- Install Adobe Acrobat or other PDF software on your computer
- Open the document to be converted
- Select **[File>Print]** to change the current printer
- Select **Adobe PDF Writer or other PDF** printer driver

Note: This process may change depending on the word processing program or other PDF conversion software. It may be necessary to find the printer selection options elsewhere. Please consult the user manual for your software.

- **[Print]** the file. The file does not actually print; it begins the conversion process asking for a file name and saving location. (Be sure to note the "Save in:" location.)



1.10 PDF Conversion

- Name the file, add the .pdf extension, and click **[Save]**. The document now has been converted to PDF under the newly assigned name, and the original document remains in the word processing format.

1.11 PDF Document Requirements

Documents converted from any word processing program must

- Comply with PDF versions 1.0 through 1.4
- Not contain security settings or have all security settings deactivated
- Have all fonts referenced in the record, including the "base 14 fonts," embedded
- Not contain any file compression

Documents scanned

- Use at least 250-300 dpi for scanning
- Set image type to black and white bitmap, text (image only), or line art
- Adjust brightness to best possible view
- Must be identical in content and appearance to the source document

1.12 Setting Up PDF Reader Software

All pleadings must be converted to and filed as PDF documents. To view documents, a PDF reader software such as Acrobat Reader must be installed. When installing this product, please review and follow the vendor's instructions.

1.13 Documents Filed in Error - Help Desk

A document incorrectly filed in a case may result from (a) posting the wrong PDF file to a docket entry; (b) selecting the wrong document from the menu; or (c) entering the wrong case number and not discovering the error before completing the transaction. The ECF system does not permit you to change the misfiled document or incorrect docket entry after the transaction has been accepted.

To request a correction, telephone as soon as an error is discovered.

Help Desk - East St. Louis **1-866-867-3169**
OR
Help Desk - Benton **1-866-222-2104**

You will need to provide the case and document numbers for the document requiring correction. If appropriate, the court will make an entry indicating the document was filed in error. Do **NOT** attempt to re-file the document. You will be advised if re-filing is required.

For additional support when the Help Desk is closed, please refer to the "Frequently Asked Questions" documentation at http://www.ilsd.uscourts.gov/cm_ecf.html.