

Complex Civil Electronic Filing Pilot Project

Huge Documents Filed in Minutes

The Superior Court of Orange County is one of six courts chosen for a pilot program on handling complex civil cases (see page 66). One aspect of the cases is the huge volume of documents they generate. The Orange County court created a way for parties to submit briefs, motions, and other legal pleadings electronically [via a Web page](#), without needing special software, instead of having to print out, copy, and deliver documents to the court clerk's office.

The attorney registers online, submits the documents as PDF files, receives an e-mail confirmation (with a tracking number), and, when the clerk completes the filing process, receives an e-mail notice that the documents were either accepted or rejected (along with any other case information). The attorney provides credit card information to pay the filing fees; no extra fee is charged for e-filing. The documents are imported into the court's document management system.

The software can accept large PDF files, and the files can be fully searched (an enormous help to legal researchers). The user interface was carefully designed to be simple to use, and the program requires little support from the court's technology staff, although users can send e-mail to a help line if they run into problems.

Court-Furnished E-Filing

Although other trial courts in California accept electronic filing of documents in some cases, the Orange County project is unique in providing the e-filing software and interface at no extra charge to parties. Court staff did all the programming, and the court provided all the hardware, software, and technical support. The filing system was designed to make expansion to other types of cases easy.



The Orange County court holds brown-bag seminars to educate the legal community about complex civil electronic filing options.

Impacts

- The project received a 98 percent favorable rating from e-filing litigants, who are surveyed at the site and asked for suggestions. Based on user comments and suggestions, several improvements have been made since the pilot project began.
- Litigants save the costs of paper, printing, copying, and delivery of documents to the court (including parking fees).
- Foot traffic in the court clerk's office is reduced, and waiting lines are shorter.
- Court staff members can process e-filed papers in a more orderly sequence and manage their workflow better. They spend less time batching, sorting, scanning, and verifying paper documents.
- Attorneys can file documents from remote locations at any time of day, seven days a week.
- The PDF files have better image quality than photocopies and are text-searchable. The PDF bookmark function can be used to move quickly through documents, many of which are very lengthy.
- Communication between the court and the attorneys is faster, which improves bench-bar relations.

Tremendous Savings of Time and Paper

A 100-page document—which previously required from 45 minutes to 1 hour for counter processing, scanning, indexing, and the like—can now be filed in 5 to 10 minutes, without using a single sheet of paper.

The screenshot displays the 'Complex Civil E-filing' web portal. The main content area is titled 'Details & Required Field' and contains several sections of input fields. The 'Case Information' section includes fields for Case Number, Filing Number, Case Name, and Case Number. The 'Filing Information' section includes fields for Filing Date, Filing Time, Credit Card, and Expiration Date. The 'Attachments' section includes four rows for 'Attachment 1' through 'Attachment 4', each with a 'Description' field and a 'Remove' button. A 'Message' field is located at the bottom of the form. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with various options like 'Home', 'Case Info', 'Locations', 'Civil', 'Criminal', 'Family', 'General Jury', 'Juvenile', 'Probation', and 'Traffic'. The top of the page features the 'Superior Court of California County of Orange' logo and a 'Complex Civil E-filing' header.

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