



**FLORIDA COURTS TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS
SECTION II: EFILING STANDARDS
[ALL-IN-ONE DOCUMENT]**

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FLORIDA COURTS TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS

SECTION: 2

CAPTION: E-FILING STANDARDS

ITEMS: 2.0.0 through 2.2.15



ITEM 2.0.0 | E-FILING STANDARDS

All electronic processes such as pleadings, motions, etc. that involve the judiciary must be approved as defined by Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.236(b)(1) before implementation and must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"). Multiple pleadings, motions, etc. should not be combined into one single file, but rather each document should be uploaded via the Florida Court's E-Filing Portal ("Portal") document submission process.

The Portal is governed by the Florida Courts E-Filing Authority. The Portal provides a central statewide point of access for filing court records and allows for interfaces with other existing statewide information systems.



ITEM 2.1.1 | ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION AND FILING OF DOCUMENTS

With the establishment of the Portal, the Florida Courts have a centralized statewide e-filing system. On June 21, 2012, the Supreme Court issued opinions approving recommendations to require e-filing by attorneys and e-service.



ITEM 2.1.2 | DOCUMENT FILING

The Portal will accept new filings in Word, PDF, and PDF/A formats. The preferred format for filing is the PDF/A format where original document intelligence has been maintained.

Documents filed through the Portal will be provided to the clerk in PDF/A format when the clerk is able to receive and store a PDF/A document as follows:

- Documents filed in an approved PDF/A format will be provided to the clerk as originally filed.
- Documents filed in Word format will be converted to an approved PDF/A format.
- Documents filed in other searchable PDF formats will be converted to an approved PDF/A format.
- Documents filed in other non-searchable PDF formats will be rasterized (i.e., converted into bitmap file format) as an approved PDF/A format.
- Digital signatures and digital notarizations will not be passed or maintained by the Portal.



ITEM 2.1.3 | SIZE OF FILING

A single submission, whether consisting of a single document or multiple documents, shall not exceed 50 megabytes (50 MB) in size.



ITEM 2.1.4 | DOCUMENT CREATION AND FORMAT**2.1.4.1 File Format**

Document files should not be saved or converted into formats that remove desirable document intelligence (i.e., files should not be flattened).

2.1.4.2 Document Formatting

All electronically filed documents should be legibly typewritten or printed on only one side of letter-sized (8 ½ by 11 inches) paper; should have one-inch margins on all sides and on all pages and pages should be numbered consecutively; shall be filed in a format capable of being electronically searched and printed; should be filed in black and white; reduction of legal-size (8 ½ by 14 inches) documents to letter size (8 ½ by 11 inches) is prohibited; documents that are to be recorded in the public records of any county shall leave a 3-inch by 3-inch space at the top right-hand corner of the first page and a 1-inch by 3-inch space at the top right-hand corner on each subsequent page blank and reserved for use by the clerk of court.

2.1.4.3 Scanned Documents

Scanned documents should be scanned using Optical Character Recognition ("OCR"). The scanning process should use a minimum resolution of 300 DPI. Documents should be electronically signed as defined in Section 2.1.8, Electronic Signatures.

2.1.4.4 Supported PDF/A Document Intelligence Elements

The following PDF/A document intelligence elements are permitted in documents submitted to the Florida Courts: bookmarks, electronic signatures, attachments created using the Insert feature to append pages to a document, internal links, embedded internal hyperlinks, embedded persistent external hyperlinks, and embedded images.



2.1.4.5 Prohibited PDF/A Document Intelligence Elements

The following elements must not be used in PDF/A documents submitted to the Florida Courts: embedded attachments, comments, annotations, hidden deleted items (these should be purged), embedded non-persistent external hyperlinks, embedded thumbnails, for fields and actions, JavaScript, and embedded non-display data. These elements are prohibited because they might be flattened, invalidated, modified, or deleted during the document workflow process.

2.1.4.6 Encryption Prohibited

A compliant PDF/A file must be open and available to anyone or any software that processes the file. User IDs and passwords may not be embedded.

2.1.4.7 Searchable Content

PDF documents filed with the Portal must be searchable. Documents filed in nonsearchable PDF format will be rasterized (i.e., converted into bitmap file format) as an approved PDF/A format.

2.1.4.8 Accessibility

Documents filed with the Portal must comply with the accessibility requirements of Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.526. Additional ADA requirements can be found in Section 8.1, ADA and Technology Compliance.

Deviation from these guidelines may result in the submitted filing being moved to the Correction Queue by the Clerk with the filer being notified via e-mail and requested to correct the issue(s) with the document(s) and resubmit the filing.

ITEM 2.1.5 | REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL FILERS**2.1.5.1 Exhibits**

Multiple exhibits can be filed in one submission as long as each exhibit is accompanied by a cover page and does not exceed submission file size. On each cover page, the number of pages should be noted for that exhibit. To the extent an exhibit exceeds the size limitation, each portion shall be separately described as being a portion of the whole exhibit (e.g., Exhibit A, Part 1 of 5, Part 2 of 5, etc.).

2.1.5.2 Confidentiality and Sensitive Information

The Portal shall provide the following warning before documents are submitted through the Portal, "WARNING: As an attorney or self-represented filer, you are responsible to protect confidential information under Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.420 and 2.425. Before you file, please ensure that you have complied with these rules, including the need to complete a Notice of Confidential Information form or motion required under Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.420 regarding confidential information. Your failure to comply with these rules may subject you to sanctions."



ITEM 2.1.6 | FILE NAME

The following special characters are not allowed in a file name:

- Quotation mark (")
- Number sign (#)
- Percent (%)
- Ampersand (&)
- Asterisk (*)
- Colon (:))
- Angle brackets (less than, greater than) (< >)
- Question mark (?)
- Backslash (\)
- Slash (/)
- Braces (left and right) ({ })
- Pipe (|)
- Tilde (~)
- Period (.) The filer should not add an extension. The application will add it automatically.
- Comma (,)
- Apostrophe (')

In addition, file names cannot exceed 150 bytes in length, including spaces. Spaces must be counted as three (3) bytes each.



ITEM 2.1.7 | RETRANSMISSION OF ELECTRONIC FILING

If within 24 hours after filing information electronically, the filer discovers that the version of the document available for viewing through the Electronic Case Filing System is incomplete, garbled, or otherwise does not depict the document as transmitted, the filer shall notify the clerk of court immediately and retransmit the filing if necessary.



ITEM 2.1.8 | ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES**2.1.8.1 Signatures of Registered Users**

A submission by a registered user is not required to bear the electronic image of the handwritten signature or an encrypted signature of the filer. Electronic signatures may be used in place of a handwritten signature unless otherwise prohibited by law. The information contained in the signature block shall meet the following required elements defined in Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.515. Electronic signature formats of s/, /s or /s/ are acceptable.

Attorney Example

s/ John Doe

Bar Number 12345

123 South Street

City, FL 12345

Telephone: (123) 123-4567

E-mail Address

Self-Represented Example

s/ Jane Doe

123 North Street

City, FL 12345

Telephone: (123) 123-4567

E-mail Address

2.1.8.2 Multiple Attorneys of Record Signatures

When a filing requires the signature of two or more attorneys of record:

- The filing attorney shall initially confirm that the content of the document is acceptable to all attorneys required to sign the document and shall obtain the signatures of all attorneys on the document. For this purpose, physical, facsimile, or electronic signatures are permitted.
- The filing attorney then shall file the document electronically, indicating the signatories, (e.g., "s/ Jane Doe," "/s John Smith," "/s/ Jane Doe Smith," etc.) for each attorney's signature.



2.1.8.3 Judge Signature

Judges are authorized to electronically sign all orders and judgments. If digitized signatures of judges are stored, they are to be placed at a minimum 256-bit encryption and protected by user authentication.

2.1.8.3.1 Security

An electronic signature of a judge shall be accompanied by a date, timestamp, and the case number. The date, time stamp, and case number shall appear as a watermark through the signature to prevent copying the signature to another document. The date, time stamp, and case number shall also appear below the signature and not be obscured by the signature. When possible or required, the case number should be included also. Applications that store digitized signatures must store signatures in compliance with FIPS 140-2.

2.1.8.3.2 Functionality

The ability to affix a judicial signature on documents must include functionality that will improve the process. This functionality at a minimum should include the following:

- The ability to prioritize documents for signature.
- Allow multiple documents to be reviewed and signed in a batch in addition to individually.
- The judge must have the ability to review and edit, reject, sign and file documents.
- Have a standard signature block size on the document.
- Allow forwarding of queued documents to another judge for signature if the primary judge is unavailable.
- After documents are signed or rejected, they should be removed from the queue.
- Have the ability to electronically file the signed documents into the case management system to be electronically distributed to all appropriate parties.



2.1.8.3.3 Clerk Signature

Unless otherwise required by law, Clerks and Deputy Clerks are authorized to electronically sign any documents that require the signature of the clerk, subject to the same security requirements that apply to a judge's signature under standard 2.1.8.3.



ITEM 2.1.9 | EMERGENCY FILING

The Portal must provide a mechanism to indicate that a filing is an emergency.



ITEM 2.2.1 | MINIMUM FUNCTIONALITY

- Single statewide login.
- Single Portal for attorneys as mandated per administrative order.
- Process for non-attorneys and self-represented users to access the system (e.g., state agencies, local agencies, law enforcement, mediators, process servers, etc.).
- Uniform authentication method.
- Single point of access for filing and service.
- Consolidated electronic notification.
- Process for local validation.
- Automated interface with other e-filing systems as outlined in Portal documentation.
- Utilize the approved XML ECF Standards.
- Accommodate bi-directional transmissions to and from courts.
- Integrate with other established statewide systems.
- Accept electronic forms of payment.
- All court-based e-filing processes will use Internet-based open standards.



ITEM 2.2.2 | ELECTRONIC FILING ENVELOPE

The Portal shall generate an electronic filing envelope for each submission. The e-filing envelope must comply with current rules of procedure and with e-filing envelope requirements established by the **FCTC** for each division and court type. These requirements can be found at <http://www.flcourts.org/resources-and-services/court-technology/efiling/>.

The e-filing envelope shall be in .XML format and contain the data elements needed to support the filing, indexing, docketing, calendaring, accounting, reporting, document development, case management, case maintenance, and other necessary functions of the court. The Portal shall prompt the filer for all relevant information, identifying each data element as required or optional.



ITEM 2.2.3 | PORTAL TIME STAMP

Date and time stamp formats must include a single line detailing the name of the court or Portal and shall not include clerk seals. Date stamps must be 8 numerical digits separated by slashes with 2 digits for the month, 2 digits for the date, and 4 digits for the year. Timestamps must be formatted in 12-hour time frames with a.m. or p.m. included.

The Portal's official file stamp date and time shall be affixed in the upper left-hand corner in Eastern Time. The Florida Supreme Court and District Courts of Appeal stamps shall be on the left margin readable horizontally. Any administrative agency stamp shall be in the right margin and readable horizontally. The clerk's stamp for circuit and county courts shall be at the bottom of the document.



ITEM 2.2.4 | ELECTRONIC NOTIFICATION OF RECEIPT

All submissions must generate an acknowledgment message that is transmitted to the filer to indicate that the Portal has received the document.

At a minimum, the acknowledgment must include the date and time the submission was received which is the official filing date/time.



ITEM 2.2.5 | REVIEW BY CLERK OF COURT

When information has been submitted electronically to the Clerk of Court's Office, via the Portal, the clerk of court will review the filed document and determine whether it contains the required information for placement into the clerk's case maintenance system.

If, during the local document receiving process, a determination is made that the filed document conflicts with any court rules or standards, then the clerk shall place the filed document into a correction queue. A filing may be placed in a correction queue for any reason that prevents the filing from being accepted into the clerk's case maintenance system ("CMS"), e.g., documents that cannot be associated with a pending case; a corrupt file⁴; or an incorrect filing fee.

Once placed in a correction queue, the clerk shall attempt to contact the filer using the filer's registered e-mail address and ask the filer to correct the identified issue(s) and resubmit. If not corrected, the filing will remain in a correction queue for no more than 5 (five) business days, after which time the filing will be moved to the abandoned filing queue.

Endnotes

⁴ Document(s) that cannot be opened or read.



ITEM 2.2.6 | DOCKET NUMBERING

The sequence numbers will not be included in the interface between the Portal and the local clerk CMS and will not be provided to the filer as part of the e-filing notification process.



ITEM 2.2.7 | SECURITY

The Portal shall provide initial screening and protection against unauthorized network intrusions, viruses, and attacks for all filings. The Portal shall be isolated from other court networks or applications. Software and security devices such as antivirus software, firewalls, access control lists, filters, and monitoring software must be used by the Portal to provide this initial protection to court networks.

Computers that receive and accept filings from the Portal must be protected against unauthorized network intrusion, viruses, and attacks. These computers interface with the local CMS to accept e-filings. Software and security devices such as antivirus software, firewalls, access control lists, filters, and monitoring software must be used to protect the local court systems.



ITEM 2.2.8 | FILING PROCESS

The Portal shall support both a single session filing process and a system-to-system process.



ITEM 2.2.9 | SUBMISSION VALIDATION

The Portal shall validate each submission to detect any discrepancies (e.g., incomplete data or unacceptable document type) or other problems (e.g., viruses) before transmission to the clerk of court. The Portal will return a submission to the correction queue if a virus is detected within the submission or if one or more of the documents in the submission is corrupt. The Portal will e-mail the filer immediately if the Portal detects discrepancies or other problems with the submission, based on technical issues. The validation rules will be specific to the type of submission (for example, new case initiation as opposed to filings in an existing case).



ITEM 2.2.10 | ADDING A PARTY

The Portal shall facilitate the addition of parties after the initial pleading is filed.



ITEM 2.2.11 | CONFIDENTIALITY AND SENSITIVE INFORMATION

The Portal shall provide the following warning before documents are submitted through the Portal, "WARNING: As an attorney or self-represented filer, you are responsible to protect confidential information under Fla. R. of Gen. P. & Jud. Admin. 2.420 and 2.425. Before you file, please ensure that you have complied with these rules, including the need to complete a Notice of Confidential Information form or motion required under Fla. R. Gen. Prac. & Jud. Admin. 2.420 regarding confidential information. Your failure to comply with these rules may subject you to sanctions."



ITEM 2.2.12 | SYSTEM AVAILABILITY AND RECOVERY PLANNING

Computer systems that are used for e-filings must protect electronically filed documents against system and security failures during periods of system availability. Additionally, contingencies for system failures and disaster recovery mechanisms must be established. Scheduled downtime for maintenance and updates should be planned, and a notification shall be provided to filers in advance of the outage. Planned outages shall occur outside normal business hours as determined by the Chief Judicial Administrative Officer of the Court. E-filing systems shall comply with the security and backup policies created by the **FCTC**.



ITEM 2.2.13 | SYSTEM AVAILABILITY AND RECOVERY PLANNING - PLANS

2.2.13.1 Plan 1: Contingency Plan

Timeframe: Immediate - during normal working hours.

Scope: Localized system failures while court is still open and operational. This plan will also be put into operation when Continuity of Operations ("COOP") and Disaster Plans are implemented.

Operational Levels: Levels of operation will be temporarily limited and may be conducted in electronic or manual processes. Since court will still be open, this plan must address how documents will be received while the system is down.

Objectives:

- Allow the court to continue with minimum delays by providing a temporary alternate solution for access to court files.
- Conduct tests to verify the restoration process.
- Have local and local offsite backup of the operating system, application software, and user data available for immediate recovery operations.
- Identify areas where redundancy is required to reduce downtime and provide for "hot" standby equipment that can be utilized in the event the Contingency Plan is activated.

2.2.13.2 Plan 2: Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery

Timeframe: Disaster dependent, varies.

Scope: Declared disasters either local or regional that impact the geographic area.

Operational Levels: Temporarily unavailable or limited until facilities are deemed functional or alternate facilities can be established. Mission Essential Functions as defined in the Supreme Court's COOP for the affected area must be addressed in the designated priorities and timeframes.



Objectives:

- Allow court operations to recover in the existing location or alternate facility.
- Provide cooperative efforts with impacted entities to establish access to court files and allow for the continuance of court proceedings.
- Provide in the Contingency Plan a temporary method to meet or exceed Mission Essential Functions identified in the Supreme Court's COOP.
- Provide another tier level of recoverability by having a backup copy of the operating system, application software, and user data in a protected environment outside of the local area not subject to the same risks as the primary location for purposes of recovery according to standards approved by the **FCTC**.
- This plan may provide another out-of-state tier for data backup provided that the non-local in-state tier is established.



ITEM 2.2.14 | DOCUMENT FILING

The Portal will accept new filings in Word, PDF, and PDF/A formats. The preferred format for filing is the PDF/A format where original document intelligence has been maintained.

Documents filed through the Portal will be provided to the clerk in PDF/A format when the clerk is able to receive and store a PDF/A document as follows:

- Documents filed in an approved PDF/A format will be provided to the clerk as originally filed.
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- Documents filed in other non-searchable PDF formats will be rasterized (i.e., converted into bitmap file format) as an approved PDF/A format.
- Digital signatures and digital notarizations will not be passed or maintained by the Portal.



ITEM 2.2.15 | ELECTRONIC NOTARIZATION

Electronic notarization is authorized as provided in Florida Statute 117.021. Note, electronic notarizations may be flattened, and the certificate invalidated as the document moves through the filing process.



APPENDIX



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ORIGINAL SOURCE

<u>#</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Link</u>
1	Original Source	www.FLCourts.org

CONTACT INFORMATION

E: TextBookDiscrimination@gmail.com

W: www.TextBookDiscrimination.com

Congratulations! You're now **booked up** on Section II (*eFiling Standards*) of the the Florida Courts Technology Standards!

