

## **E-filing soon to be mandatory in Rankin Chancery Court**

January 16, 2013

Electronic filing of court records will become mandatory in Rankin County Chancery Court on Feb. 4. Rankin Chancery Court began accepting voluntary e-filing Jan. 2.

Hinds Chancery Court is close behind, with voluntary e-filing expected to begin Feb. 4, and mandatory e-filing expected to begin March 4. Yazoo and Holmes Chancery Courts are planning to begin voluntary attorney e-filing in February. Specific dates have not been set for those courts..

The Mississippi Electronic Courts (MEC) system is nearing completion of e-filing capabilities for the chancery courts in the metropolitan Jackson area. Madison County was the original pilot test site for the development of MEC. Madison County Chancery Clerk Arthur Johnston and his staff worked with MEC to adapt the federal court's e-filing and document management system for use by the state courts. Voluntary e-filing began in Madison Chancery Court in July 2009, and e-filing became mandatory in September 2009.

Attorney training will be provided by MEC staff at the Supreme Court Courthouse, 450 High Street in Jackson, on Jan. 17, 29 and 31. The training schedule is:

Jan. 17, 1-4 p.m.;

Jan. 29, 9 a.m. to noon;

Jan. 31, 1-4 p.m.

Online registration is available at this link: [http://courts.ms.gov/mec/mec\\_attorney\\_training.html](http://courts.ms.gov/mec/mec_attorney_training.html).

Attorneys and their staff may participate in the free training. Three hours of instruction includes application of the Mississippi Electronic Courts, capabilities and functions of the MEC system, registration to use the MEC system, duties of the attorney in his or her official dealings with the court system, and an overview of the Mississippi Electronic Courts Administrative Procedures as adopted by the Mississippi Supreme Court.

The initial pleading in any civil case must still be filed on paper in the office of the clerk in courts which use MEC. All subsequent pleadings are filed electronically.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. said, "The addition of Hinds and Rankin counties to MEC is a significant point of development in moving toward the goal of a unified statewide e-filing system for the judiciary. Almost 50 percent of the lawyers in this state live in Hinds, Rankin and Madison counties."

E-filing and instant notice via e-mail will improve the efficiency of the courts, and will allow attorneys and their staffs to more efficiently utilize their time. Judges using MEC can access documents at any time and location via the Internet, allowing them to prepare for hearings and draft orders and opinions without waiting for paper files. Attorneys and their staffs may file and view documents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Less time and money will be spent on travel to courthouses to file and copy documents. MEC helps courts reduce records storage space and expenses. Redundant electronic storage off-site protects records in the event of a disaster.

More than 3,225 attorneys currently use the MEC system. That's 45 percent of the approximately 7,050 active practicing attorneys in the state. Also, about 1,150 non-attorneys are currently registered to use the system to access court records.

E-filing is mandatory in Chancery, Circuit and County Courts in Madison, Harrison and Warren counties, and in the Chancery Court of DeSoto County.

E-filing is currently utilized only in civil cases. Development of the criminal records component is underway. Circuit and County Courts in Harrison, Hinds, Madison, Rankin and Warren counties are expected to be the first to utilize the MEC system for criminal cases.

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