



Bankruptcy Court Operations During COVID-19 Pandemic

Information current as of September 2, 2021

1. How does COVID-19 impact my bankruptcy?

Many government procedures and processes have been temporarily modified to protect the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. The implications for your bankruptcy proceeding depend on which federal district your case is being heard in:

- The **Western District of Washington** serves the area west of the Cascade Mountains from Oregon to the Canadian border (specifically, Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Island, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Thurston, Wahkiakum, and Whatcom Counties). The district courthouses are in Seattle and Tacoma.
- The **Eastern District of Washington** serves Eastern Washington from the summit of the Cascade Mountains (specifically, Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, and Yakima Counties). The district courthouses are in Spokane and Yakima.

Read on for more information about COVID-19 procedures in your district.

Western District of Washington

2. Is the courthouse open?

Western District courthouses are **open** to the public. Masks are required for all visitors regardless of vaccination status in all public and common areas of the courthouse. Please do not enter the courthouse if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have experienced any COVID-19 symptoms in the past ten days.

3. How do I file paperwork or pay court fees?

The Clerk's offices in both the Seattle and Tacoma courthouses are providing in-person services during normal business hours, but you are encouraged to use online services wherever possible.

To reduce in-person traffic at the courthouse, the court created an online filing option for parties without an attorney; visit <https://www.wawb.uscourts.gov/content/temporary-electronic-filing-option-parties-without-attorney> to file documents online. If your filing is an emergency or includes time-sensitive documents needed for a hearing, call your court at 206-370-5200 (Seattle) or 253-882-3900 (Tacoma). You can also file by mail by sending your paperwork to the appropriate address below.

Seattle courthouse:

U.S. Bankruptcy Court
700 Stewart Street, Ste 6301
Seattle, WA 98101

Tacoma courthouse:

U.S. Bankruptcy Court
1717 Pacific Avenue, Ste 2100
Tacoma, WA 98402-3233

You can also pay your fees online by visiting <https://www.wawb.uscourts.gov/online-payments>. You can also send a money order or certified funds to the Clerk's office by mail.

4. Will my hearings be held in person or over the phone?

In-person hearings in the Western District resumed on August 1, 2021 at the discretion of the presiding judge. In order to determine whether your hearing will take place at the courthouse or over the phone, review your judge's chambers procedures at <https://www.wawb.uscourts.gov/chambers-information>. This page will also provide information about participating in remote hearings. **If you have an in-person hearing scheduled and you are diagnosed with COVID-19 or begin experiencing symptoms, we recommend that you call chambers and/or request a telephonic hearing in writing using the online filing option above; do not enter the courthouse.**

5. What about my 341 meeting?

By order of the U.S. Trustee for this district, **all 341 meetings will be held over the phone or by videoconference.** In rare cases, the U.S. Trustee may approve an in-person meeting if the trustee in a particular case believes it is necessary, but unless you are told otherwise, you should assume your 341 meeting will be held remotely.

Eastern District of Washington

6. Is the courthouse open?

Eastern District courthouses are **open**, but court users are encouraged to use online services whenever possible. Masks are required for all visitors in all public areas.

7. How do I file paperwork or pay court fees?

The Clerk's offices are providing in-person services and are also available at 509-458-5300 during normal business hours. You can also file your paperwork online using the Electronic Self-Representation (eSR) tool. Visit <https://www.waeb.uscourts.gov/electronic-self-representation-esr/> for more information on getting started with eSR.

You may pay any fees online by visiting <https://www.pay.gov/public/form/start/787214321>.

8. Will my hearings be held in person or over the phone?

Hearings in the Eastern District will generally be held in person, but special COVID-19 safety precautions apply. Please review the procedures for your hearing in advance:

- Spokane proceedings: https://www.waeb.uscourts.gov/local/Announcements/Spokane-COVID-protocol-06_02_20.pdf
- Yakima proceedings: https://www.waeb.uscourts.gov/local/Announcements/Yakima-COVID-protocol-06_02_20.pdf

9. What about my 341 meeting?

By order of the U.S. Trustee for this district, **all 341 meetings will be held telephonically**. Please visit https://www.waeb.uscourts.gov/local/Announcements/Clerks-Notice_.pdf for instructions on participating in telephonic 341 meetings.

*This packet provides general legal information for those residing in Washington. It is not a substitute for individualized legal advice.