

Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 49.1: Privacy Protections for Filings Made with the Court

(a) Redacted Filings. Unless the court orders otherwise, in an electronic or paper filing with the court that contains an individual's social-security number, taxpayer-identification number, or birth date, the name of an individual known to be a minor, a financial-account number, or the home address of an individual, a party or nonparty making the filing may include only:

- (1) the last four digits of the social-security number and taxpayer-identification number;
- (2) the year of the individual's birth;
- (3) the minor's initials;
- (4) the last four digits of the financial-account number; and
- (5) the city and state of the home address.

(b) Exemptions from the Redaction Requirement. The redaction requirement does not apply to the following:

- (1) a financial-account number or real property address that identifies the property allegedly subject to forfeiture in a forfeiture proceeding;
- (2) the record of an administrative or agency proceeding;
- (3) the official record of a state-court proceeding;
- (4) the record of a court or tribunal, if that record was not subject to the redaction requirement when originally filed;
- (5) a filing covered by Rule 49.1(d);
- (6) a pro se filing in an action brought under [28 U.S.C. §§ 2241, 2254, or 2255](#);
- (7) a court filing that is related to a criminal matter or investigation and that is prepared before the filing of a criminal charge or is not filed as part of any docketed criminal case;
- (8) an arrest or search warrant; and
- (9) a charging document and an affidavit filed in support of any charging document.

(c) Immigration Cases. A filing in an action brought under [28 U.S.C. § 2241](#) that relates to the petitioner's immigration rights is governed by [Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 5.2](#).

(d) Filings Made Under Seal. The court may order that a filing be made under seal without redaction. The court may later unseal the filing or order the person who made the filing to file a redacted version for the public record.

(e) Protective Orders. For good cause, the court may by order in a case:

- (1) require redaction of additional information; or
- (2) limit or prohibit a nonparty's remote electronic access to a document filed with the court.

(f) Option for Additional Unredacted Filing Under Seal. A person making a redacted filing may also file an unredacted copy under seal. The court must retain the unredacted copy as part of the record.

(g) Option for Filing a Reference List. A filing that contains redacted information may be filed together with a reference list that identifies each item of redacted information and specifies an appropriate identifier that uniquely corresponds to each item listed. The list must be filed under seal and may be amended as of right. Any reference in the case to a listed identifier will be construed to refer to the corresponding item of information.

(h) Waiver of Protection of Identifiers. A person waives the protection of Rule 49.1(a) as to the person's own information by filing it without redaction and not under seal.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOTES

2007 Adoption

The rule is adopted in compliance with section 205(c)(3) of the E-Government Act of 2002, [Public Law No. 107-347](#). Section 205(c)(3) requires the Supreme Court to prescribe rules “to protect privacy and security concerns relating to electronic filing of documents and the public availability ... of documents filed electronically.” The rule goes further than the E-Government Act in regulating paper filings even when they are not converted to electronic form. But the number of filings that remain in paper form is certain to diminish over time. Most districts scan paper filings into the electronic case file, where they become available to the public in the same way as documents initially filed in electronic form. It is electronic availability, not the form of the initial filing, that raises the privacy and security concerns addressed in the E-Government Act.

The rule is derived from and implements the policy adopted by the Judicial Conference in September 2001 to address the privacy concerns resulting from public access to electronic case files. See <http://www.privacy.uscourts.gov/Policy.htm>. The Judicial Conference policy is that documents in case files generally should be made available electronically to the same extent they are available at the courthouse, provided that certain “personal data identifiers” are not included in the public file.

While providing for the public filing of some information, such as the last four digits of an account number, the rule does not intend to establish a presumption that this information never could or should be protected. For example, it may well be necessary in individual cases to prevent remote access by nonparties to any part of an account number or social security number. It may also be necessary to protect information not covered by the redaction requirement--such as driver's license numbers and alien registration numbers--in a particular case. In such cases, protection may be sought under subdivision (d) or (e). Moreover, the Rule does not affect the protection available under other rules, such as [Criminal Rule 16\(d\)](#) and [Civil Rules 16](#) and [26\(c\)](#), or under other sources of protective authority.

Parties must remember that any personal information not otherwise protected by sealing or redaction will be made available over the internet. Counsel should notify clients of this fact so that an informed decision may be made on what information is to be included in a document filed with the court.

The clerk is not required to review documents filed with the court for compliance with this rule. The responsibility to redact filings rests with counsel and the party or nonparty making the filing. Subdivision (e) provides that the court can order in a particular case more extensive redaction than otherwise required by the Rule, where necessary to protect against disclosure to nonparties of sensitive or private information. Nothing in this subdivision is intended to affect the limitations on sealing that are otherwise applicable to the court.

Subdivision (f) allows a person who makes a redacted filing to file an unredacted document under seal. This provision is derived from section 205(c)(3)(iv) of the E-Government Act. Subdivision (g) allows the option to file a register of redacted information. This provision is derived from section 205(c)(3)(v) of the E-Government Act, as amended in 2004.

In accordance with the E-Government Act, subdivision (f) of the rule refers to “redacted” information. The term “redacted” is intended to govern a filing that is prepared with abbreviated identifiers in the first instance, as well as a filing in which a personal identifier is edited after its preparation.

Subdivision (h) allows a person to waive the protections of the rule as to that person's own personal information by filing it unsealed and in unredacted form. One may wish to waive the protection if it is determined that the costs of redaction outweigh the benefits to privacy. If a person files an unredacted identifier by mistake, that person may seek relief from the court.

Trial exhibits are subject to the redaction requirements of Rule 49.1 to the extent they are filed with the court. Trial exhibits that are not initially filed with the court must be redacted in accordance with the rule if and when they are filed as part of an appeal or for other reasons.

The Judicial Conference Committee on Court Administration and Case Management has issued “Guidance for Implementation of the Judicial Conference Policy on Privacy and Public Access to Electronic Criminal Case Files” (March 2004). This document sets out limitations on remote electronic access to certain sensitive materials in criminal cases. It provides in part as follows:

The following documents shall not be included in the public case file and should not be made available to the public at the courthouse or via remote electronic access:

- unexecuted summonses or warrants of any kind (e.g., search warrants, arrest warrants);
- pretrial bail or presentence investigation reports;
- statements of reasons in the judgment of conviction;
- juvenile records;

- documents containing identifying information about jurors or potential jurors;
- financial affidavits filed in seeking representation pursuant to the Criminal Justice Act;
- ex parte requests for authorization of investigative, expert or other services pursuant to the Criminal Justice Act; and
- sealed documents (e.g., motions for downward departure for substantial assistance, plea agreements indicating cooperation).

To the extent that the Rule does not exempt these materials from disclosure, the privacy and law enforcement concerns implicated by the above documents in criminal cases can be accommodated under the rule through the sealing provision of subdivision (d) or a protective order provision of subdivision (e).

Additional Requirements

Documents that contain signatures of criminal defendants must be scanned and uploaded.

Ordinary Ex Parte motions, for which notice is provided to all parties, should be filed electronically. Ex Parte documents for which no notice is provided to opposing parties should be filed in paper format under seal. Ex parte documents filed electronically must be served on all parties.

Current Federal Policy on Access to Criminal Case Files

The following documents in a criminal case shall not be included in the public case file and should not be made available to the public at the courthouse or via remote electronic access:

- unexecuted summonses or warrants of any kind (e.g., search warrants, arrest warrants);
- pretrial bail or presentence investigation reports;
- statements of reasons in the judgment of conviction;
- juvenile records;
- documents containing identifying information about jurors or potential jurors;
- financial affidavits filed in seeking representation pursuant to the Criminal Justice Act;
- ex parte requests for authorization of investigative, expert or other services pursuant to the Criminal Justice Act; and
- sealed documents (e.g., motions for downward departure for substantial assistance, plea agreements indicating