



Michigan Supreme Court

State Court Administrative Office
Michigan Hall of Justice
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Lansing, Michigan 48909
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Jennifer Warner
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 29, 2020

TO: Circuit and District Court Administrators
County Clerks
Probate Registers

FROM: Stacy Westra, Management Analyst

RE: Affixing and Use of Electronic Seals

Courts have recently asked if they are allowed to electronically apply their seal to electronic documents. Yes, under current statute and standards courts are allowed to affix their seal to electronic documents, including summonses, warrants, and judgements of sentence.¹ The definition of “seal” under MCL 8.3n,² amended in 2010, includes a seal affixed electronically; MCL 565.232 permits a court seal to be affixed electronically upon an electronic document.

[Michigan Trial Court Records Management Standards](#) 3.3.1.10 provides the standards for both the court seal and the process of affixing an electronic seal.

Required Seals and Stamps:

- Each court of record must have a seal that identifies the court to which it applies. An electronic seal of the court for use with electronic filing and on electronic documents must comply with the following requirements:
 - **Graphics Format:** PNG or TIFF

¹ The authority for these actions is found in Records Management Standards 3.1.1; MCL 712A.14b; MCL 764.1; MCL 780.651; and *People v Snyder*, 181 Mich App 768 (1989); *People v Paul*, 203 Mich App 55 (1993).

² In all cases in which the seal of any court or public office is required to be affixed to any paper or electronic document issuing from the court or office, the word “seal” shall be construed to include any of the following: (a) The impression of the seal on the paper alone, (b) The impression of the seal affixed to the paper by means of a wafer or wax, (c) *The seal affixed electronically on the paper or affixed to an electronic document.* (Emphasis added.)

- **Size:** Must be at least 144x144 pixels (height and width should be the same)
- **Color:** Grayscale (not color, and not just solid black)
- **Opacity:** Must not obscure text on a document but must still be clearly identifiable when printed and subsequently photocopied
- **Orientation:** Seal outlines should touch the edges of the image; whitespace around the outside will lead to sizing precision issues

A court may choose to implement the use of an electronic seal at any time. The following is an example of how the court can electronically affix the seal. The court may use any process that complies with seal standards outlined above.

1. Create a digital watermark of the court's embossed seal.
 - a. Courts without a digital watermark – contact the creator of the embossed seal and request a copy of the digital image. (Note: A digital image was necessary to make the original “carving.”)
 - b. Courts whose seal creator is out of business or has no copy of the digital image – contact a graphic designer to recreate the embossed seal in digital form.

(Note: Courts having difficulty locating a graphic designer may contact their Regional Office or Court Services for suggestions.)
2. Use Adobe Acrobat to affix the seal to the PDF document. The Adobe Acrobat version used by the court must allow PDFs to be edited. (Note: Adobe Reader is not sufficient for electronic sealing of documents. Courts can [download Adobe Pro here](#). Adobe Pro is not free of cost.)³
3. Receive or generate the electronic document.
4. The trial court applies the watermark seal in the following manner:
 - a. Open the completed PDF document in Adobe Acrobat
 - b. Choose View > Tools > Edit PDF > Open > Add Image 
 - c. In the Open dialog box, locate your court seal image
 - d. Select the image file, and click Open
 - e. Click over the signature line, or click-drag to size the image as you place it over the line⁴
 - f. Right click on image > arrange > send to back (this will move the image behind the signature line), as shown below:

³ The Adobe software solution and steps provided are an option. A court may seek out alternative solutions to accomplish this according to the standards provided.

⁴ The seal must cover the judge's signature and some portion of text in the order or judgment signed (see RMS 3.3.1.11).

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you will lose this right.

4. If you are in district court on time, you will have an opportunity to give the reasons why you feel you should not be evicted. Bring witnesses, receipts, and other necessary papers with you.
5. If you are not in district court on time, you may be evicted without a trial and a money judgment may be entered against you.

4/21/2020
Date Issued

/s/ Sarah Spring
Court clerk

*The certificate of mailing applies to landlord-tenant cases only. This document must be sealed by the seal of the court.

A court is not required to apply a seal electronically, but doing so will allow the court to process documents electronically, which may also mean remotely.

If you have questions, please contact me at CourtServices@courts.mi.gov or 517-373-9574.