

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

**IMPORTANT NOTICE TO THE BAR AND PUBLIC CONCERNING
CHIEF JUDGE STATUS REPORT, INCLUDING AMENDED GENERAL ORDER
REGARDING COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES
CREATED BY CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

In response to the rapidly developing facts, preparedness planning and response guidance concerning COVID-19, please take note of the attached Chief Judge Status Report, which includes this Court's *Amended General Order Regarding Court Operations Under the Exigent Circumstances Created by Coronavirus (COVID-19)*, effective September 7, 2021.

The Status Report (with attachments) is annexed hereto and is available on the Court's website, njb.uscourts.gov.

Dated: August 27, 2021

Jeanne A. Naughton, Clerk



**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

TO: All Members of the Bar and Public
FROM: Michael B. Kaplan, Chief Judge
DATE: August 27, 2021
RE: Status Report on COVID-19 Courthouse Operations

It is my sincere hope that this communication finds you well, and I thank you for your exceptional cooperation and patience as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Notwithstanding our meticulous safety protocols and desire to move toward more normalized operations in September, the rise of COVID-19 cases and virulence of the Delta variant have created new obstacles for us to overcome. Consequently, and in accordance with the attached *Amended General Order Regarding Court Operations under the Exigent Circumstances Created by Coronavirus (COVID-19)* dated August 27, 2021, the Court will continue to, among other protocols, conduct all hearings remotely.¹

Please continue to monitor the Court's website for further guidance and/or additional COVID-19 protocols regarding physical access to the courthouses.

Thank you for your continued support so that we can fulfill our responsibility to ensure the safety of our employees and those who appear before the Court. We look forward to a time when all parties are able to safely access the courthouses once again.

¹ While individual judges in their discretion may schedule an in-person hearing in the designated emergency courtroom, the bar and public are advised that compliance with new vaccination and testing protocols will be enforced. Counsel and parties are directed to contact each judge's chambers well in advance of any scheduled in-person hearing to confirm that all necessary safety precautions have been taken.

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

**AMENDED GENERAL ORDER REGARDING COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE
EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

WHEREAS the Centers for Disease Control has directed all employers and places of public accommodation to plan and prepare for operations that help to minimize spread of the Coronavirus that causes COVID-19;

WHEREAS the District of New Jersey is among those areas with a significant number of identified and projected cases of COVID-19; and

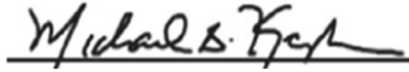
WHEREAS this Court continues to monitor its operations to identify measures that will help slow the spread of COVID-19 by minimizing contact between persons, while at the same time, preserving its core mission of serving the public through the fair and impartial administration of justice;

IT IS hereby on this 27th day of August 2021 **ORDERED:**

- 1) The United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey will remain open. Clerk's Office staff will continue to be available by mail, email, and through the main phone line in each vicinage. Additionally, the Clerk's Office front counters will remain open to the public, on a limited basis, in accordance with District of New Jersey COVID-19 recovery protocols and as set forth in the annexed schedule. Filings will continue through CM/ECF and limited staff will be available to receive mail and process intake. The public should utilize the Court's services in a manner consistent with state and local health guidelines;
- 2) Unless otherwise directed by the presiding judge, trials will continue in the ordinary course and will be conducted remotely. Parties are directed to contact the presiding judge's chambers for guidance on individual cases. More specific protocols for remote trials have been posted on the Court's website;

- 3) Unless oral argument is requested, on written notice to all parties in interest, all motions and contested matters will be presumed to be heard on the papers. Parties may request oral argument via email to chambers. If permitted by the judge, oral argument must be conducted remotely and presented through a third-party provider. The recording by the third-party provider will constitute the official record of the Court. The Court will also consider and accommodate all reasonable adjournment requests;
- 4) All case trustees will consider and accommodate all reasonable requests for continuance of § 341(a) meetings;
- 5) For purposes of clarity, no deadlines are extended unless otherwise set forth in this Order;
- 6) The exigent circumstances created by COVID-19 warrant the following exceptions:
 - a. Original signature retention requirements for counsel under local and national rules are deferred.
 - b. Parties initiating contested matters under Fed. R. Bank P. 9013 and 9014, may effectuate service through electronic mail. Regular mail service is still required for all parties and counsel for which such means of service is unavailable.
 - c. These exceptions will expire on November 30, 2021 unless otherwise modified by this Court.
- 7) This Order modifies the Court's (i) General Order dated March 16, 2020, (ii) Amended General Order dated March 19, 2020, (iii) Amended General Order dated March 27, 2020, (iv) Amended General Order dated April 6, 2020, (v) Amended General Order dated May 1, 2020, (vi) Amended General Order dated June 1, 2020, (vii) Amended General Order dated July 31, 2020, (viii) Amended General Order dated September 8, 2020, (ix) Amended General Order dated October 30, 2020, (x) Amended General Order dated January 4, 2021, (xi) Amended General Order dated March 31, 2021, and (xii) Amended General Order dated April 26, 2021.

8) The provisions of this Order are effective as of September 7, 2021 and shall remain in effect through and including November 30, 2021. This Order may be revisited at that time and is subject to interim revision as conditions may occur.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael B. Kaplan", is written over a horizontal line.

Michael B. Kaplan, Chief Judge
U.S. Bankruptcy Court
District of New Jersey



Jeanne A. Naughton
Clerk of Court

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC
(Effective September 7, 2021)

U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey

LIMITED OFFICE HOURS

Please take note that the front counters for each vicinage of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of New Jersey will remain open to the public on a limited basis. Any person who desires entrance to the Courthouse must wear a mask or face covering, adhere to social distancing, abide by all health and hygiene signage throughout the building and may be subject to thermal temperature scanning.

The Centers for Disease Control has advised people to take precautions in light of the COVID-19 virus outbreak and noted that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The U.S. Marshal, his Deputies and the Court Security Officers shall enforce all safety protocols.

Clerk's Office Hours:

Front Counter (In-Person):

TUESDAY through THURSDAY
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

****MONDAY and FRIDAY****

No In-Person at the Clerk's Office(s) Front Counters

Telephone:

8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

Clerk's Office is available by Phone Monday through Friday

Drop Box:

8:30 AM - 6:00 PM

Drop Box for Court Documents (Trenton and Camden)

8:30 AM - 7:00 PM

Drop Box for Court Documents (Newark)

- For questions or concerns regarding this notice, please contact one of the Bankruptcy Court Clerk's Offices. Camden: 856-361-2300; Newark: 973-645-4764; Trenton: 609-858-9333
- For District Court matters, please contact one of the District Court Clerk's Offices. Camden: 856-757-5021; Newark: 973-645-3730; Trenton: 609-989-2065
- For Court of Appeals matters, please contact the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit at 215-597-2995