

NUECES COUNTY COURT AT LAW NO. 1
ZOOM PROTOCOL FOR LITIGANTS/PARTY PARTICIPANTS
APRIL 1, 2020

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis, the Governor has declared a state of emergency and the Office of Court Administration and the Texas Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals have mandated that all non-essential court proceedings should be suspended. However, technology allows options not previously available. As such, Nueces County Court at Law No. 1 will be using Zoom video conferencing to conduct some hearings if: (1) the Court approves it; (2) and if the parties have the technology to do it; and (3) all parties desire to do so. Understandably, in the early stages of this process, the Court will start with non-contested matters.

The following restrictions and limitations will apply but should be similar to what is required for an in-person hearing.

Zoom is free to download. Your computer must have internet access, a video camera and a microphone. IF YOU CAN ONLY PARTICIPATE VIA TELEPHONE, YOU MUST COORDINATE IT THE DAY BEFORE WITH THE COURT REPORTER. An app is available for your phone, but the quality is not as good as an iPad, laptop or computer. If using a cellphone, audio quality is better with an earbud w/mic or headset w/mic. If the Court struggles with your reception, it will stop the hearing and reschedule for a future date.

Understanding that all participants must be able to participate by Zoom, the scheduling Attorney must receive a setting from the Court Manager, Mary Alice, and ensure that the Court Manager (Maryalice.greses@nuecesco.com) and the Court Reporter (patricia.morales@nuecesco.com) have the email addresses of all participants no later than 48 hours before any hearing. Because of the importance of the record, the Court Reporter, Patricia, will be the host of all hearings. Once hearing is scheduled, the Court Reporter will forward Zoom link information to all participants and court staff; i.e., Judge, Court Manager and Court Clerk.

If exhibits are to be considered by the Court for the hearing, they must be emailed to the Court Reporter at patricia.morales@nuecesco.com no later than 48 hours before the hearing. They must be in .pdf format. The subject of the email must contain the full cause number and be labeled accordingly; i.e., "Plaintiff's Exhibit #", "Defendant's Exhibit #". The Court cannot consider any exhibits not emailed

to the Court Reporter in a timely manner. If you fail to follow this requirement, the Court Reporter will not maintain these documents as part of the record.

On date of hearing, participants should join the Zoom meeting five minutes before scheduled hearing time making sure their name is visibly displayed. All participants will be held in the “waiting room” until all parties are present, and the Court is ready to proceed.

Once hearing is called, Judge will invite movant to make presentation without interruption from other participants. Everyone will be given an opportunity to speak. To prevent background noise, if not addressing the Court or questioning a witness, parties are asked to mute themselves until such time as they need to address the Court.

The following are also mandated:

- Dress appropriately and professionally; although, you do not need to wear coat and tie.
- Be on time.
- Please confer ahead of time.
- Speak loudly, clearly, and slowly.
- Identify yourself and who you represent before a hearing begins to judge and court reporter.
- Identify yourself each time you speak.
- Display your name on video chat profile.
- Test speaker and microphone before joining meeting.
- **Recording is prohibited by law.** You are technically in the courtroom, but remotely.
- Before joining a meeting, be sure to check system requirements to avoid any connection issues. For further information, please click on <http://zoom.us/test>.
- In order to comply with the Open Courts provision and as advised by the Office of Court Administration, live proceedings may be streamed via YouTube on Channel: Nueces CCL1. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCw9m3RtJiTjM-Bb2HSohdMw>