



153rd District Court

Trial Guidelines

The following trial guidelines apply in the 153rd District Court with appropriate modifications to fit the circumstances.

1. **Trial Hours:** Typical trial hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with lunch from 11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The courthouse closes at 5:00 p.m. and the buses stop running at 7:00 p.m. If it is anticipated that the trial will go past 5:00 p.m., counsel should notify the court at least one day in advance to allow for additional resources.
2. **Access to Court Facilities:** Witnesses and parties are not to enter the restricted areas of the courtroom unless permitted. Witnesses and parties will go to another floor to use the restrooms facilities during jury breaks. Counsel shall not enter the same areas when a jury is being selected or impaneled. Witnesses and parties are to stay in the assigned conference rooms until they are called.
3. **Trial Equipment:**
 - a. Visual Document Presenter
 - b. Touch screen drawing monitor at the podium and witness stand
 - c. Computer monitors at all counsel tables and jury box
 - d. HDMI and Super VGA connectors at the podium and counsel tables
 - e. Microphones
 - f. Wi-Fi access (Hidden Access Manually)
 - g. Conference Room
 - h. Counsel table power outlets
 - i. Conference Calling / Webex (Approval required by the Judge)
 - j. Easels
 - k. Kleenex, fresh water and cups
4. **Non Trial Equipment:** The court's printer, copier, fax, paper, general office supplies and storage space are not provided by the court. Counsel members are encouraged to bring these items to court.

5. **Counsel Standing:** Counsel shall stand at the podium and microphone when addressing the court or jury. Counsel may move about the courtroom only on the approval by the Judge. Counsel shall request permission prior to approaching a witness or the bench.

6. **Voir Dire:** Before Voir Dire begins, the attorneys will be given a Voir Dire package by the bailiff. This package will include a seating chart, questionnaires, and list of jurors by name. At the end of Voir Dire these documents should be returned to the bailiff for proper disposal.

Voir Dire consists of group and individual sessions. The group Voir Dire includes the court's introduction and the party's general questions and answers examination. During the group voir dire, counsel shall not challenge for cause in front of the panel nor allow the panel to be tainted by a panel member's response. After the conclusion of the group voir dire, attorneys may call any panel member for individual voir dire to establish grounds for cause, cover areas of concern raised by a juror's responses during the group voir dire, or like reasons.

7. **Reported Voir Dire:** Counsel must request voir dire to be reported. If voir dire is reported, counsel should ensure that a panel member is identified for the record and before their comments.

8. **Numbering of Exhibits:** Exhibits are to be numbered as set forth in counsel's exhibit list.

9. **Use of Exhibits:** Exhibits can be displayed on the visual presenter or digitally using a computer and the supplied HDMI or Super VGA connectors. Exhibits can be seen on all courtroom monitors and heard on all courtroom speakers.

10. **Large Exhibits:** Exhibits exceeding 8 ½" x 11" in size will be accompanied by an 8 ½" x 11" copy. After completion of trial, the court reporter will retain only the 8 ½" x 11" copy and the original exhibit will be returned to the offering party.

11. **Demonstrative Exhibits and Trial Aids:** Demonstrative exhibits and trial aids may be used by all counsel members. Counsel shall not mark on or attach any item to an opposing counsel's demonstrative exhibit while using it.

12. **Deposition Excerpts:** Prior to reading a deposition into evidence, counsel will tender a copy of the portion to be read to opposing counsel, the court reporter and the court. If the deposition is by video, it is expected that the offering party will furnish the court reporter with a marked deposition transcript prior to playing the deposition. Video depositions are not written down by the court reporter.

13. **Witness:** Witnesses are required to remain seated in the witness stand during their testimony. The Court can grant permission for the witness to move to some other location while testifying. If a witness is allowed to move about the courtroom, the witness will be so situated so the court reporter can clearly hear the testimony.

14. **Interim Summations:** In multiple week trials, the court may elect to allow interim summations.

15. **Court's Charge:** Each juror will be given a copy of the charge prior to its reading. Each side shall submit their proposed charge in electronic format (Microsoft Word) to the court reporter via e-mail or flash drive.