

# **NextGen CM/ECF Central Sign-On Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

NextGen functionality is based on the concept of one login and password for each user to access any NextGen court via Central Sign-On (CSO). External users log in to NextGen courts through PACER.

In NextGen, courts no longer maintain judiciary and external filer user accounts in a court's database. An external filer determines their user ID and password when creating or upgrading their PACER Service Center (PSC) account.

## **1. Why is it still called PACER if a user is logging in to e-file in CM/ECF?**

Most users logging in are PACER-only users, so the decision was made to continue to use the PACER name. E-filers' NextGen CM/ECF accounts are linked to the external filers' PACER accounts. PACER is the Central Sign-On (CSO) account.

## **2. When a court goes live on NextGen, are attorneys in a court's database exported into the PACER database?**

No, attorneys in CM/ECF are not exported to PACER. An attorney must log in to PACER and upgrade their PACER account then follow the instructions to link their PACER account to their CM/ECF account in a NextGen court. The attorney must repeat the linking process for each NextGen court in which they e-file.

## **3. When is the CSO account feature activated?**

CSO becomes active only when NextGen CM/ECF software is installed on a court's database. Once the upgraded PACER account is linked to the ECF account in a court, the same PACER user ID and password is used to log in to a NextGen court's database.

## **4. If a user practices in more than one court, does the user have to upgrade PACER for each court that goes on NextGen CM/ECF?**

No, a user's PACER account is only upgraded once. The user must register to e-file at each court that goes to NextGen CM/ECF, or if they already have an e-filer account in the court, they must link the upgraded PACER account to the ECF account.

## **5. When must external e-filers convert to an upgraded PACER Central Sign-On account?**

There is no set date by which a PACER-only user must convert to an upgraded PACER account. PACER's website recommends that all users upgrade for security purposes, but it is not required for non-filing users. To e-file in a NextGen CM/ECF court, a user is required to upgrade their PACER account and to link the upgraded PACER account to their CM/ECF account in the NextGen court before they can file. A non-filing PACER-only

user is required to upgrade their PACER account to change account information such as their password or email address.

**6. Are read-only PACER accounts being abolished with NextGen CM/ECF?**

No, read-only PACER accounts continue to exist for any PACER user that does not need to e-file documents.

**7. Can external users upgrade their PACER accounts at the same time a court is converting from CurrentGen to NextGen CM/ECF?**

Yes, a user can upgrade their PACER account during the conversion process. However, once the court begins the conversion process, an external user cannot request e-filing access in that court until the court is live on NextGen. When the court is live on NextGen CM/ECF, the PSC adds the court to the list of NextGen courts in which an external user can register to e-file.

**8. A user needs a PACER account first and then a CM/ECF account. How long does it take to activate that PACER account?**

The PACER account is created immediately if the user provides credit card information. If the user does not provide credit card information, the PACER search/print activation occurs via postal mail and can take several days. If the user has ECF access to a court and the court is live on NextGen CM/ECF, the user can link the upgraded PACER account to the ECF account and e-file immediately. If the user does not have an ECF account, an ECF account can be requested while in PACER, but the user cannot e-file until the court acts on the access request.

**9. While registering at the PACER Service Center, my session timed out and I had to start over. I could not enter the user name I entered before. Is this by design?**

The session timeout on the registration process is 30 minutes. If the registration process is not complete, the user must start over. During the registration process, the user name chosen is reserved. If the registration is not completed, the reservation is released by a system process that runs hourly. After an hour, the same user name entered during the first attempt can be used.

**10. How is a court notified that a filer has created a PACER account and has requested access to the court's NextGen CM/ECF system?**

PACER sends the data and documents collected during the e-filer registration process to the court's CM/ECF server for review and approval. A record of the attorney request together with any attached documentation displays on the CM/ECF utility, Central Sign-On Administration: Public Users page.

**11. Is a filer automatically notified upon approval or denial of his/her CM/ECF access request?**

Yes, an email is sent automatically to notify the attorney of the status of the request when action is taken.

**12. A user with an existing CM/ECF account may submit a new access request. Can a user be prevented from submitting a duplicate request for access?**

No, it is not possible to prevent an upgraded PACER account user from submitting a new CM/ECF access request instead of linking to their existing CM/ECF account.

The court must process the access request in the Central Sign-On Administration: Public Users utility which finds a match in ECF if the user provided the same information when registering via PACER. If the user has an ECF account but registered to e-file again using different personal information or a different role type (e.g., creditor instead of attorney) the utility does not find a match. The court may approve the account or use ECF's Maintain User Accounts feature to search for that user before approving the registration request.

Because there is sometimes a legitimate need for additional CM/ECF accounts, and since those accounts can all be linked to the same PACER account, a court may send an email to a user during the review process to solicit clarification for the duplicate before it decides on how to handle the request.

**13. If an attorney or party is faced with a CM/ECF filing deadline, might PACER be the reason why the deadline cannot be met?**

No. PACER accounts can be activated immediately if credit card information is provided. Once the PACER account is activated, it can be linked to the user's CM/ECF account in the NextGen court, and the attorney can then log in to CM/ECF and file.

**14. If credit card information is not included when a filer registers for a PACER account, does that exclusion delay the processing of the CM/ECF access request?**

No. PACER searches are delayed until credit card information is provided, but submission of access requests to a NextGen CM/ECF court are not delayed.

**15. After a court goes live on NextGen CM/ECF, what happens in the following situations when an e-filer logs in to PACER for filing access?**

**SCENARIO**

A user has upgraded a PACER account that used to be a shared account. A different attorney is registered for ECF but has not logged in to ECF or PACER since the court

implemented NextGen CM/ECF. The attorney must meet a filing deadline. The attorney uses their ECF bookmark and is redirected to the Central Sign-On page at PACER where they enter their ECF login and password or the old shared PACER login and password. What happens?

**ANSWER:**

The login fails because there is no match on PACER. A message displays explaining the steps the user must take – register for PACER and link the PACER account to the ECF account.

**CONTINUATION OF SCENARIO**

The attorney figures out that a new PACER account is needed. How long does it take to complete that process? Is there a human approval process? Does it affect the amount of time if credit card information is entered or not? If the attorney started trying to e-file the document at 11:00 p.m., will the required process be completed so the document can be e-filed before midnight?

**ANSWER:**

No human intervention is required. After completing the new online PACER registration forms, the PACER account is created immediately if credit card information is provided. The user can then immediately link the new PACER account to their ECF account. The attorney should be able to complete the new account registration and linking process in time to e-file the document but following the instructions on the screen is critical.

The credit card information is related to PACER privileges. If the user enters valid credit card information, then their PACER viewing/printing privileges start immediately. If no credit card information is entered, then the PACER Service Center mails an activation letter. Once the user receives the letter, they can activate their PACER privileges.

**16. An attorney has requested two separate logins to be used for different purposes (attorney/trustee work, for example). Can an attorney have two separate CM/ECF and PACER accounts in NextGen?**

In a bankruptcy court, a trustee may also have a private attorney account for filing. It is more efficient and less confusing to have separate PACER accounts for the trustee and attorney work.

The trustee may use two accounts in PACER linked to two accounts in ECF: one for the attorney, and another for the trustee role.

**17. Are concurrent CM/ECF logins allowed? Can multiple staff members operating on behalf of the attorney be logged in at the same time?**

Yes, in NextGen CM/ECF, multiple concurrent login sessions are allowed.

**18. In addition to firms that have more than one divisional office, some are franchises in other districts. Do these firms have issues with creating and maintaining CM/ECF e-filer accounts in several districts?**

The individual attorney owns the CM/ECF account, not the law firm. An attorney can request permission to e-file in any NextGen court and if the court grants access, one PACER login can be used to access any NextGen court in any district. The court continues to maintain control over who has access and the permissions that are given to a user.

**19. What happens when users of shared PACER accounts attempt to view a document link in a Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF)? Does the user still get a free look?**

A PACER login is not required to view the document via the NEF on the first occasion. If the user attempts to view the document a second time, a PACER login is required. Upgrading the PACER login just for viewing purposes is not required, so the shared account does still work if no one else has upgraded and, therefore, claimed the PACER account.

**20. An attorney registered for CM/ECF leaves a firm and the court receives a bounceback for the email address linked to the account. If the attorney provides the court with a new physical address and email, what action will the court take?**

An attorney can update their contact information (e.g., address, email address) in PACER. The updated information is sent to the court where it can be reviewed and processed to update the user's user account record in CM/ECF.

**21. How does an attorney set up an account so that the same credit card is used for all payment types, such as searching/printing and filing?**

During the PACER registration process, a user sets the default PACER payment method. When requesting e-filing privileges in a court, the user can set the default payment for e-filing to use the same credit card or a different card or method. A user can also select **Manage Recurring Payments** on the Manage My Account/Manage My Filer Account screen on the PACER website and set up the payment methods on that screen.

**22. Filing Agents are used for the attorney or trustee's accounts. Do these continue to be available as PACER accounts once the account is upgraded and after the court goes live on NextGen?**

Bankruptcy courts that allow the use of filing agents can continue to do so with some differences:

- New filing agents must register at the PACER Service Center for a filing agent account in the court. The request will be processed at the court.
- Existing filing agents must upgrade their PACER account and link it to their existing CM/ECF account.
- The existing filing agent to attorney/trustee links are preserved.
- An attorney or trustee is still able to remove an existing filing agent but is no longer able to create new filing agents.
- While the filing agent can e-file as if they are the attorney/trustee, the existing ability to track that it was the filing agent who e-filed an event is preserved.

Like other users, filing agents who need to change their account information, such as their address, do so at the PACER Service Center and the updated information is sent to the court system for processing.

**23. If a Filing Agent attempts to continue to use their boss's exempt PACER login instead of his/her own, will it work, and will it continue to be exempt?**

Filing agents can continue to use an existing exempt account until the court implements NextGen CM/ECF. After a court implements NextGen CM/ECF, the trustee may upgrade their PACER account, link it to their CM/ECF account, and activate the exempt status. At this point, the prior exempt account is disabled. The filing agent must create an individual upgraded PACER account and link it to their existing CM/ECF account. The trustee must notify the PACER Service Center when a filing agent's PACER account should be exempt.

**24. In NextGen CM/ECF, how are requests to deactivate an account handled? Is the process different if it is not the account holder making the request?**

An e-filer can request account deactivation via PACER's Manage My Account utility. The court processes the request via the CSO Update Registration utility. If the court needs to deactivate an account based on its own determination or the request of an employer for an employee account, the court can access CM/ECF's Maintain User Accounts utility to 1) use the lock out check box, or 2) add a user end date to the record.

**25. In NextGen CM/ECF, can a user link his/her PACER account to a locked CM/ECF account?**

Yes, and the account remains locked in ECF.

**26. Can an attorney store separate credit card information for PACER fees and for filing fees?**

Yes, the user can have up to three credit cards and/or ACH accounts and manage their use in PACER.