

Changes to Electronic Access and Service of Sealed Documents in Civil and Criminal Cases

Starting immediately, most federal courts, including the United States District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin, will restrict access to sealed documents on the CM/ECF system. Sealed documents filed through CM/ECF will no longer be accessible or viewable through PACER or CM/ECF except by court personnel. This change applies only to documents filed under seal. It does not affect most CM/ECF filings, which will remain accessible to parties and the court.

The courts must take this action because sophisticated and persistent cyberattacks threaten the security of confidential case documents on the CM/ECF system. Some background is provided in a press release from the Administrative Office of the United States Courts:

<https://www.uscourts.gov/data-news/judiciary-news/2025/08/07/cybersecurity-measures-strengthened-light-attacks-judiciarys-case-management-system>.

Parties must continue to file sealed documents through CM/ECF as before. But because sealed documents on CM/ECF will be accessible only by the court, the filing party must serve any sealed document by other means provided by the Federal Rules of Procedure. Parties with the right to access a sealed document may request a copy of the document by contacting the clerk's office if they do not already have a copy.

The Court will soon issue updated Administrative Orders affected by this change and revise our Electronic Filing Procedures governed by Local Rule 5.

For questions regarding this new policy, please contact the clerk's office by email at wibd_ecfhelp@wibd.uscourts.gov or by phone at (866) 241-7123.