



Spokane County Court House

SPOKANE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT

Public Safety Building
P.O. Box 2352
1100 West Mallon Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99210-2352

Aimee N. Maurer
Judge

Aimee Maurer
Acting Presiding Judge

John Witter
Court Administrator

SPOKANE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT DECLARATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY PANDEMIC OPERATIONS

1. **Effective Date**

March 16th, 2020

2. **Summary**

In support of strategies that were announced on March 11th, and March 16th, 2020, by Washington Governor Jay Inslee, and recommend measures announced on March 13th, and March 14th, 2020 by Dr. Bob Lutz, Spokane County Health Officer, and other regional leaders to minimize the spread of COVID-19, the Spokane County District Court (SCDC) will operate at a “national emergency pandemic” response level. The COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving and necessitated going to this response level on March 16th, 2020.

3. **Authority**

By declaration of Aimee Maurer, Acting Presiding Judge for Spokane County District Court, in accordance with the agreement and support of the SCDC Judges and the Emergency Order issued by the Chief Justice of the Washington State Supreme Court on March 4th, 2020.

4. **Rational**

Spokane County District Court serves a high volume of people throughout the day; therefore, it is essential to immediately reduce courthouse exposure for the court’s users and employees and promote social distancing as recommended by the Spokane Regional Health District and the Center for Disease Control and Public Health.

5. **Scope**

This declaration **applies only to Spokane County District Court locations**, which include:

- SCDC Public Safety Building – 1100 West Mallon
- SCDC Broadway Center Building – 721 North Jefferson Street
- SCDC Spokane Valley – 12710 East Sprague Avenue
- SCDC Rooms – located in the Spokane County Jail

This declaration also applies to all cases filed into Spokane County District Court by the following cities – Deer Park, Fairfield, Latah, Liberty Lake, Millwood, Rockford, Spangle and Spokane Valley.

6. **Courts NOT impacted by this declaration, but issuing their own orders regarding operations**

Spokane County residents should be aware that the changes to operations set forth in Section 7 below only applies to the Spokane County District Court.

This declaration **does not apply** to any of the following courts also located in Spokane County.

- Spokane County Superior Court
- Municipal Courts in Spokane County operating a local court rather than Spokane County District Court Services as identified in Section 5 (such as Cheney Municipal Court and Airway Heights Municipal Court).

7. **Impact of national emergency pandemic operations on Spokane County District Court**

To help protect the health of court users and employees during the COVID-19 pandemic, Spokane County District Court asks the public to avoid coming into the SCDC courthouse locations for court related matters starting March 17th, 2020, until further notice, except for priority case types listed below.

SCDC employees shall continue to report to work, unless other arrangements have been made with their managers or in the event the court announces that it is closed. Employees identified by public health as high risk for COVID-19 are encouraged to contact their manager and make appropriate accommodations.

Priority case types that will continue

- In custody hearings for defendants who are currently held in jail will continue as scheduled, and as new cases are filed.
- All hearings for protection orders will continue as scheduled, and as new cases are filed.
- Review Hearings to determine compliance with any **order issued to surrender weapons**, including orders issued in either criminal or civil cases, even if an underlying criminal case is being rescheduled to later date.
- In custody jury trials not continued by the parties.
- Limited bench warrant recall dockets.
- Mandatory DUI and DV dockets (in custody matters and out of custody DUI/DV 1st Appearances).
- Currently scheduled civil weddings shall be contacted to inquire about rescheduling or conducting the wedding ceremony on non-court premises at the discretion of the assigned District Court Judge.

Hearing type that will be rescheduled

Other than the priority case type listed above, all other case type scheduled and/or filed **on or after March 17th, 2020**, shall be continued until further order of the Court.

Other than the priority case type listed above, for all other case type scheduled **prior to March 17th, 2020**, the Court requests counsel to present off docket continuance when possible. For those individuals who are not represented, please call (509) 477-4770 to request a continuance or email

Criminal and Infraction Clerk's Office – dccasemgmt@spokanecounty.org

Civil Clerk's Office – dccivil@spokanecounty.org

In addition, the Spokane County District Court Judges will not be issuing warrants for failures to appear for non-priority court hearings unless determined necessary by the Judge(s) on a case-by-case basis. The District Court Judge will issue a "Second Chance Notice" with a new court date and send notice whenever feasible.

The hearing types to be rescheduled include but are not limited to:

- Criminal hearings/trials where the defendant is not detained on the particular case to include Mental Health and Veterans Court cases.
- Infraction hearings unless scheduled for an online hearing or hearings with only written material submitted without the need for any party to appear in court.
- Name change petitions absent an emergent need.
- Matters relating to impound of a motor vehicle(s) or animals absent an emergent need.
- All Small Claims court hearings.
- Civil hearings noted with oral argument or civil hearings/trials requiring the parties to appear in court.
- Civil weddings at the discretion of the assigned Spokane County District Court Judge.

Services that will continue

In addition to the priority matters listed above in Section 7:

- The SCDC will continue to accept new filings for civil matters and small claim, although hearing dates may be deferred.
- SCDC will continue to accept new filings of petitions for protection orders (domestic violence, anti-harassment, stalking, and sexual assault) and hearings will be set according to current practice.
- SCDC will continue to accept criminal and civil traffic infraction filing, although hearing dates may be deferred.

SCDC will continue to answer questions via telephone at (509) 477-4770 and online at

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Civil Clerk's Office – dccivil@spokanecounty.org

8. Information for defendants

Notice of rescheduled hearings from the court shall be sent via US Mail. If your mailing address needs to be updated with the court, please call the clerk's office at (509) 477-4770.

Parties with court hearings scheduled that have not been rescheduled and cannot make their scheduled hearing, due to illness or other COVID-19 concerns, should *immediately* contact their attorney if they are represented by counsel, or call (509) 477-4770 to request a continuance or

Criminal and Infraction Clerk's Office – decasemgmt@spokanecounty.org

Civil Clerk's Office – dcivil@spokanecounty.org

9. Information for persons on probation with Spokane County District Court

Appointments will continue but will be scheduled and conducted via telephone and/or video at the discretion of the probation officer. The defendant is required to contact his/her probation officer at the regularly scheduled time via a telephone call unless otherwise directed by the probation officer.

10. Information for Jurors and Interpreters

Spokane County District Court asks jurors and interpreters **not to come into any Spokane County District Court courthouse if:**

- You are sick or experiencing flu-like symptoms such as a cough, fever, or other respiratory problem.
- Persons identified by public health a high risk for COVID-19.
- You have family and/or household members in any of the above categories.

Persons with questions regarding jury service at Spokane County District Court can contact the Spokane County Jury Management Department

<https://www.spokanecounty.org/FormCenter/Superior-Court-24/Contact-Superior-Court-71>.

11. Commitment to restoring operations

Spokane County District Court recognizes that judicial services are essential to the community and is committed to restoring full operations as soon as it is safe to do so. In the meantime, the court will continue to pursue:

- Alternative ways to provide court services, including via telephone and teleconferencing.
- Restoration of in-person services when we can ensure a safe environment via cleaning protocols and social distancing in accordance with guidelines by the Public Health District and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



Aimee Maurer
Spokane County District Court, Acting Presiding Judge