

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER No. 2020-2
VIRTUAL COURT ROOM PROCEEDINGS**

**Cowlitz County District Court and the Municipal Courts for the Cities of
Longview, Kelso, Woodland, Kalama and Castle Rock**

On February 29, 2020, Washington State Governor Inslee declared a statewide State of Emergency and has subsequently issued several updates based on the significant risks of the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 4, 2020, Chief Justice Debra Stephens issued the first of several orders of the Washington Supreme Court to provide direction to the courts of the State of Washington in response to the pandemic. In addition, on March 4, 2020, the Cowlitz County Board of Commissioners declared an emergency related to the significant health threat caused by COVID-19. The health and safety risks presented by the pandemic continue.

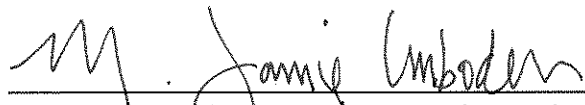
To reflect the public health emergency, Cowlitz County District Court and the Municipal Courts for the Cities of Longview, Kelso, Woodland, Kalama and Castle Rock (hereinafter "District Court") have issued Emergency Orders to provide access to justice in a manner that ensures the safety of court personnel, litigants and the public. In furtherance of safety, the Court has invoked the holding of hearings by telephone, video or other means that do not require in-person attendance, unless impossible. Where the Court matters must be heard in person, social distancing, and other recommendations of the CDC and Cowlitz County Health Department are strictly followed. For the matters scheduled from the date of this court order, the District Court finds as follows:

1. A compelling interest has been demonstrated by the ongoing health crisis that requires the Court to conduct hearings by virtual technology (ZOOM platform) and to limit physical public interaction between the parties, public and staff in accordance with the guidelines of the CDC and local health department.
2. Any person who objects to a currently scheduled matter being heard in this manner may telephone into the virtual courtroom hearing and request to be heard by the Court. Contact information can be found on the District Court website (www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/DistrictCourt). When the Court grants permission to speak, the person shall then state their objection.
3. Any form of recording of virtual court proceedings except by the Cowlitz County District Court Clerk or her designees is strictly prohibited. Requests for recordings of District Court proceedings should be directed to the Cowlitz County District Court Clerk.
4. The Court finds the means provided for the public to observe and listen to virtual court hearings is the least restrictive means available for protecting the public, the parties, and the court staff. Specifically, any party can hear and observe the proceedings by logging into the ZOOM hearing; the information to log in to District Court ZOOM hearings can be found on the Cowlitz County District Court website (www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/DistrictCourt).

All District Court hearings, unless prohibited by law, will be live streamed on YouTube for the general public to observe pursuant to *State v. Bone-Club*, 128 Wash.2d 254, 906 P.2d 325 (1995). This order will also extend to jury trials held at the Cowlitz County District Court. Links to every courtroom can be found on the Cowlitz County District Court website (www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/DistrictCourt). The Court has weighed the importance of open proceedings against the present health risks and has determined that it is appropriate to defer to the guidance of the public health experts during this pandemic. The risk of further spread of COVID-19 outweighs the public's interest to be physically present in an open court at this time.

5. This Order is in place for the scheduled proceedings and will be reconsidered daily as public health data, directives, and advice are issued. This Order is narrowly tailored as to address present health risks. No less restrictive alternative is available that will sufficiently protect the health of all present.

DATED: 8/17/20



M. Jamie Imboden, Assistant Presiding Judge
Cowlitz County District Court and the Municipal
Courts for the Cities of Longview, Kelso, Woodland,
Kalama and Castle Rock