



CLERK, U.S. BANKRUPTCY COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

ENTERED

THE DATE OF ENTRY IS ON
THE COURT'S DOCKET

The following constitutes the ruling of the court and has the force and effect therein described.

Signed May 20, 2020


United States Bankruptcy Judge

**IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS**

IN RE:

**CONTINUED COURT OPERATIONS
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

§
§
§
§

**GENERAL ORDER
2020-14**

This Order extends General Order 2020-08. In its continuing effort to address the health and safety of the public, Court employees, staff of other entities with whom Court personnel interact, and litigants and counsel who appear before the Court during the COVID-19 Pandemic, until ordered otherwise, hearings will go forward in the manner set forth below, subject to the usual rules for cancellation where parties settle, have agreed orders, or seek continuances:

1. **Video and Telephonic Hearings.** With certain exceptions set forth in paragraphs 3 and 4 below, hearings will generally be conducted by either: (a) videoconference; or (b) teleconference. Each judge, in his or her discretion, will determine which is appropriate. For example, in certain hearings where live witnesses are not necessary, the Court may decide that a telephonic hearing suffices. Additionally, in the case of video hearings, it is generally possible and permissible for a person who wishes to appear merely by telephone, and not by video, to do that if he or she prefers. The one exception is for witnesses. Witnesses in most cases will be required to testify by video.

The courtroom deputy for each judge will coordinate with the parties as to whether a hearing will be held by telephone or video.

2. **Live Hearings.** The Court will rarely hold “live” hearings where people are allowed to appear in person in the courtroom. This will be handled on a case by case basis and will generally require a motion by a party requesting a live hearing. In such situations, depending on the current entry order in place at the courthouse where the hearing is scheduled, all persons may be required to go through COVID-19 screening and wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth. The Court will also enforce appropriate social distancing in the courtroom. In the case of live hearings, parties that do not want to appear in person in the courtroom will be permitted to participate by video or telephonically (with witnesses being required to be on video, if not in the courtroom).

3. **Motions to Extend or Impose the Stay.** Motions to extend or impose the stay will initially be set for telephonic hearings, and if no objection is filed to the motion, or if an objection is filed and resolved, the debtor must appear and be prepared to testify telephonically. If an objection is filed and not resolved, and the parties do not agree to the debtor giving testimony telephonically, then the matter will be set for a video hearing and the Court may enter a bridge order if necessary. Each judge also has the discretion to recess or reset a hearing for a video or live hearing if a particular situation warrants.

4. **Adversary Trials and Lengthy Contested Matters.** For trials in adversary proceedings and contested matters requiring lengthy hearings, parties should contact the appropriate courtroom deputy and each judge will handle those on a situation by situation basis.

This Order will remain in effect until further notice.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

###END OF ORDER###