

# S.F. Court Wants More E-Filing

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SAN FRANCISCO — Civil litigators in San Francisco may be hiring fewer bike messengers this summer.

San Francisco Superior Court officials want to switch to mandatory electronic filing in complex litigation and single-assignment cases by July 1.

The court made e-filing mandatory in asbestos cases in 2006 in order to cut down on paper use and spending on case file storage.

About 75 new complex litigation cases are filed every year in San Francisco, and there are currently about 130 pending single assignment cases, according to the court. A public comment period on [the proposed rule changes](#), which are available on the court's Web site, opened this week and ends April 29.

"Expanding e-filing just makes sense in these bad economic times," Presiding Judge James McBride said in a press release Thursday announcing the plan.

San Francisco plaintiff lawyer Stephen Tigerman, who was on the court's asbestos e-filing committee, said he was initially skeptical about e-filing in asbestos cases. But, he said, it's worked out well, particularly in saving his firm copy charges and personnel costs.

"I've become a firm believer that it's better than the alternative," he said Thursday. "In the past, every time we'd have to serve something on a group of defendants, the copier would overheat and we'd have people crawling on their hand and knees stuffing envelopes all afternoon. The idea of e-service has been a great boon to us."

The one drawback Tigerman sees to e-filing is lag time between when something is submitted to LexisNexis, the e-filing service provider for the local court, and when it clears the clerk's office.

"It can be a little bit nerve-racking — you don't find out whether they've accepted or rejected it sometimes until the next day," he said. In particular, he added, that can be problematic on matters with a tight jurisdictional deadline.

In preparing the proposed rules, judges on the court's technology committee, chaired by Judge Curtis Karnow, met with attorneys from various bar associations to discuss the change in January.

Tigerman said that any negative comments at that meeting came mostly from competitors of LexisNexis who felt shut out of the process of getting the court's business.

"Most practitioners I know are in favor of e-filing because they have experience with it in federal court," said David Goldstein, an Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe partner who helped organize that meeting. "It's much more efficient and cost-effective, and allows you to access the court's docket at any time and pull pleadings from the docket."

Comments on the proposal must be in writing and sent to: Claire Williams, Court Executive Officer, San Francisco Superior Court, 400 McAllister St., Room 205, San Francisco, CA 94102.