

# NC Courts Step Into the Digital Age With E-Filing Rollout: A Look at the Progress

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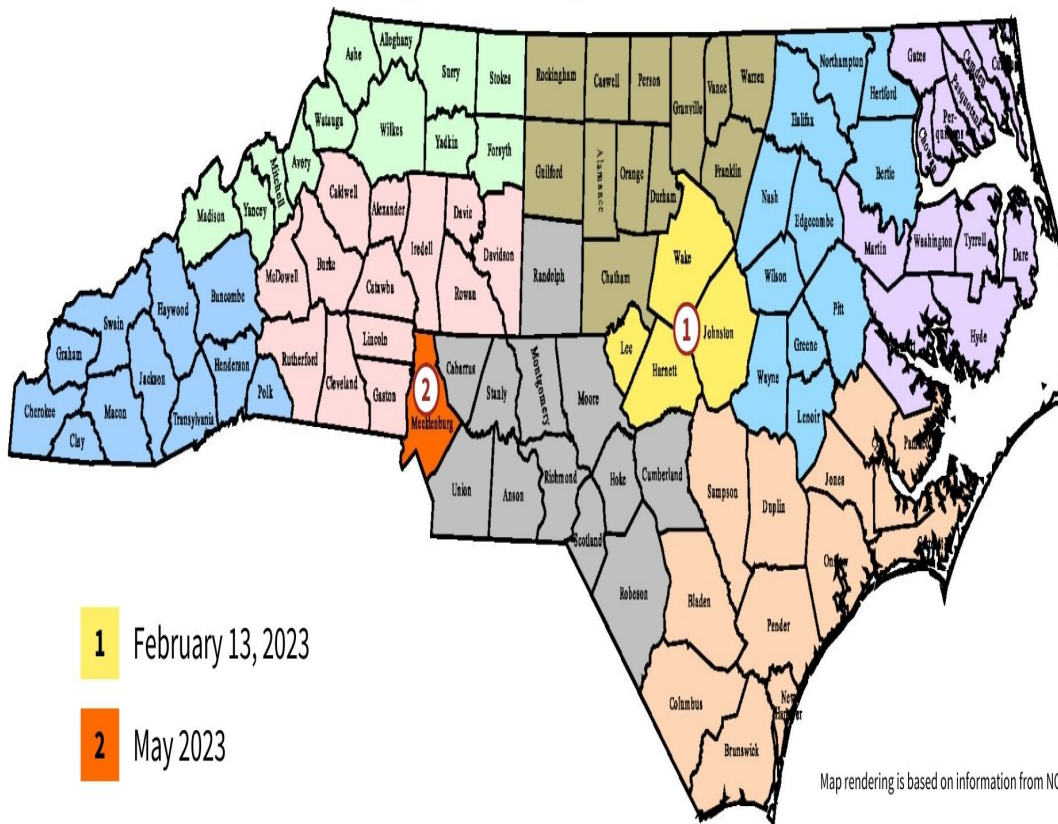
**The rollout of a statewide electronic court filing system called Odyssey Integrated Case Management System, or Odyssey ICMS, is officially underway.**

For some attorneys and paralegals, it will be a welcome change not to have to run down to the courthouse to meet a filing deadline. For others, the thought of battling technology sets them on edge. Whether you're looking forward to this big change or dreading it, we hope that the following information helps to prepare you for what's ahead. Here, we'll explain when to expect the implementation of Odyssey ICMS in your county, how the new e-filing rules will affect your day-to-day practice, and how you can stay up-to-date and learn more about using this e-filing system.

## When Will Odyssey Go Live?

Although Odyssey will be a state-wide program, it will not be implemented across all counties at the same time. The current plan is a staggered rollout: As of February 13, 2023, Odyssey went live in Wake, Lee, Johnston, and Harnett Counties. Mecklenburg will follow next. From 2023-2024, a new group of counties will switch over to Odyssey as they're ready. Odyssey should be statewide by the end of 2024. If all goes well in the early groups, the later groups may see earlier rollout dates.

# Odyssey Rollout Plan



1 February 13, 2023

2 May 2023

Take note that this timeline is subject to change. You can keep tabs on the rollout by visiting the [NC Courts website](https://www.nccourts.gov). There, the Judicial Branch will maintain a list of counties in which Odyssey has gone live.

Although the rollout of Odyssey is staggered across the state, counties in the same judicial district will implement Odyssey at the same time. And when a judicial district goes live, then all courts and all case types in that district will make the switch to Odyssey at the same time—for example, it won't be necessary to use filing paper in District Court but e-filing in Superior Court. There is, however, one wrinkle that attorneys who practice before the Business Court should keep in mind: until Odyssey is implemented for both the Business Court and in the county of venue, duplicate filings in Business Court cases will still be required in accordance with Rule 3.11 of the North Carolina Business Court Rules.

## Practical Aspects

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Of course, the shift from paper filing to e-filing ushers in the need for additional procedural changes. And where there are changes, there are questions. In anticipation of the Odyssey rollout, the NC Supreme Court [has amended the General Rules of Practice](#).

According to the amended Rules, attorneys will be **required** to file electronically. Paper filing, solely on the basis of attorney preference, will not be an option. Pro se litigants, however, may choose whether to e-file or to paper file. Attorneys--and pro se litigants who wish to e-file--must register for a user account in order to file documents electronically. Regardless of e-filing or paper filing, service must still be made in accordance with the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure, and the filing deadline is **5 p.m.**

The amended Rules also account for the possibility of problems that might prevent an attorney from e-filing by allowing attorneys to file a motion for relief from the e-filing requirement. **But take heed:** attorneys will only be granted relief if they can show the existence of an **exceptional circumstance**, including that they have **exercised due diligence** to file the document electronically before asking for relief. Exceptional circumstances include unexpected system outages, natural disasters, and other similar emergencies.

Lastly, here are some other useful tidbits about e-filing:

- **Electronic Signatures:** To remove the added step of printing and scanning in documents, e-filers may sign documents by typing "/s/" and the filer's name.
- **Redactions Required:** Because e-filing more readily grants the public access to court records, nonpublic or unneeded sensitive information—things like Social Security numbers—must be omitted or redacted before filing.
- **Hardcopy Filings:** To make the task of scanning in paper filings easier on the clerks, documents filed in hardcopy should be unfolded, firmly bound, with no manuscript cover, and they must be letter size. Exceptions will be made for wills and exhibits.
  - **Note:** these size requirements also apply in counties that have not yet implemented Odyssey.
- **Pilot Programs:** In any county that was part of the predecessor e-filing pilot program (Wake, Johnston, Harnett, and Lee), that program and its related rules will phase out when that county implements Odyssey.

## How to Learn More

The North Carolina Judicial Branch has published a one-hour, on-demand CLE for attorneys and paralegals. [From Paper to Digital: The eCourts Update](#) provides an overview of how Odyssey came about and, importantly, a demonstration of how Odyssey works. Additional training materials and resources on how to use Odyssey are available on [NCcourts.gov](http://NCcourts.gov).

## Helpful links

- Supreme Court Press Release
  - [Supreme Court Adopts Electronic-Filing Rules for the Implementation of eCourts | North Carolina Judicial Branch \(nccourts.gov\)](#)
- General Rules of Practice Amendments
  - [Order-Amending-GRP-5-5.1-22-and-27-Approved-21-April 2021.pdf \(nccourts.gov\)](#)
- Training Resources
  - Additional training videos from Tyler Tech is available here: [Training Videos –](#)

[Odyssey File and Serve Cloud \(zendesk.com\)](#)

- If you have any technical issues, Tyler Tech Support is available here: [Submit a request – Odyssey File and Serve Cloud \(zendesk.com\)](#)
- Information about Odyssey Portal can be found here: [Odyssey Public Portal \(adobe.com\)](#)
- FAQs for Lawyers:
  - [https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/documents/publications/eCourts-FAQs-for-Attorneys-Bar-QA-20221121.pdf?VersionId=6GuqJmATw.1\\_VoTZ4r7SvNVdjjWmyyW](https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/documents/publications/eCourts-FAQs-for-Attorneys-Bar-QA-20221121.pdf?VersionId=6GuqJmATw.1_VoTZ4r7SvNVdjjWmyyW).
    - Note: This document answers a lot of practical questions and can be easily searched.
- eFiling Process in Odyssey – File & Serve User Guide
- [https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/documents/publications/eFiling-Using-Odyssey-File-%26-Serve-Filer-Process-012023.pdf?VersionId=yBKplYvoqPUnxyd\\_2IK7RkH7WkZPGI6B](https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/documents/publications/eFiling-Using-Odyssey-File-%26-Serve-Filer-Process-012023.pdf?VersionId=yBKplYvoqPUnxyd_2IK7RkH7WkZPGI6B)
- Odyssey Brochure
  - [eCourts Brochure.pdf \(nccourts.gov\)](#)
- Order Amending the Supplemental Rules for the Pilot Project
  - [Order-Amending-eFiling-Pilot-Project-Rules-1-and-5-Approved-21-April-2021.pdf \(nccourts.gov\)](#)

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National Law Review, Volume XIII, Number 194

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/nc-courts-step-digital-age-e-filing-rollout-look-progress>