

CASE MANAGEMENT  
ELECTRONIC CASE FILES  
CM/ECF



Civil Case Opening Procedures

District of New Mexico  
(March 2007)

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# Electronic Case Files System Civil Case Opening Procedures

## Getting Started

### Introduction

This document provides instructions on how to use the Electronic Case Filing System to establish a Civil case number and file the corresponding initiating documents with the Court.

### Help Desk

Contact the Court's Help Desk between the hours of **8:30 AM and 4:30 PM**, Monday through Friday, if you need assistance using ECF.

**Help Desk – Albuquerque** **505-348-2075**

**Toll Free Help Desk – Albuquerque** **1-866-620-6383**

OR

**E-mail:** [cmecf@nmcourt.fed.us](mailto:cmecf@nmcourt.fed.us)

### User's Manual

You can download or view the most recent version of this document and the ECF User's Manual (in PDF format) at <http://www.nmcourt.fed.us>.

## Civil Case Opening

**NOTE:** For those wishing to open a civil case under **seal** (e.g. a Qui Tam case), please call the Helpdesk before continuing. Please see the introduction section of this manual for contact information. The Helpdesk will provide information and procedures on how you should proceed.

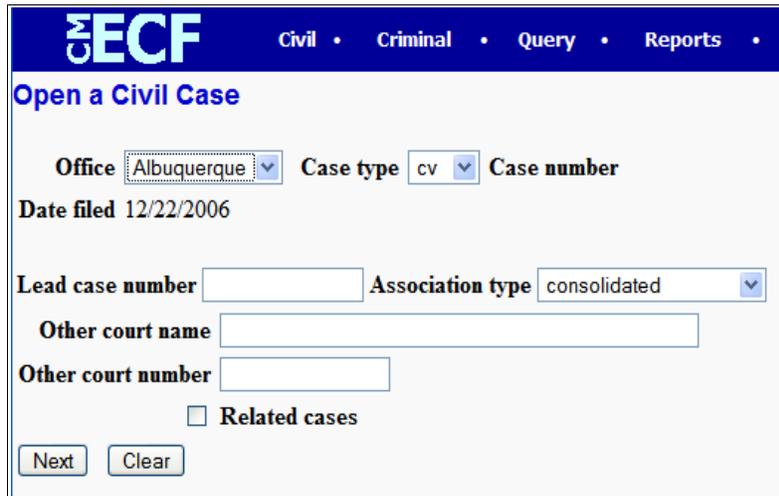
## Civil Case Opening

The Civil Case Opening function is located under **Civil** on the Main Menu Bar. Single click on **Civil** menu in the blue menu bar at the top of the screen. Under the Civil Events Menu select **Civil Case Opening by Attorneys**.



## Case Opening Screen

**NOTE:** You should **NOT** use the browser's **[Back]** button during this process. If you make a mistake during the following steps, it is better to start the process again from the beginning by selecting the **Civil** menu.



The screenshot shows the 'Open a Civil Case' form in the CM/ECF system. The navigation bar at the top includes 'Civil', 'Criminal', 'Query', and 'Reports'. The form fields are as follows:

- Office:** Albuquerque (dropdown menu)
- Case type:** cv (dropdown menu)
- Case number:** (text input field)
- Date filed:** 12/22/2006
- Lead case number:** (text input field)
- Association type:** consolidated (dropdown menu)
- Other court name:** (text input field)
- Other court number:** (text input field)
- Related cases:**  (checkbox)

Buttons at the bottom: **Next** and **Clear**.

The first step is to select a divisional office.

**Office:** Select the office where the complaint would have been filed had it been submitted in paper (Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Santa Fe). The Court will change the divisional office, as necessary, after assignment of the presiding and referral judges.

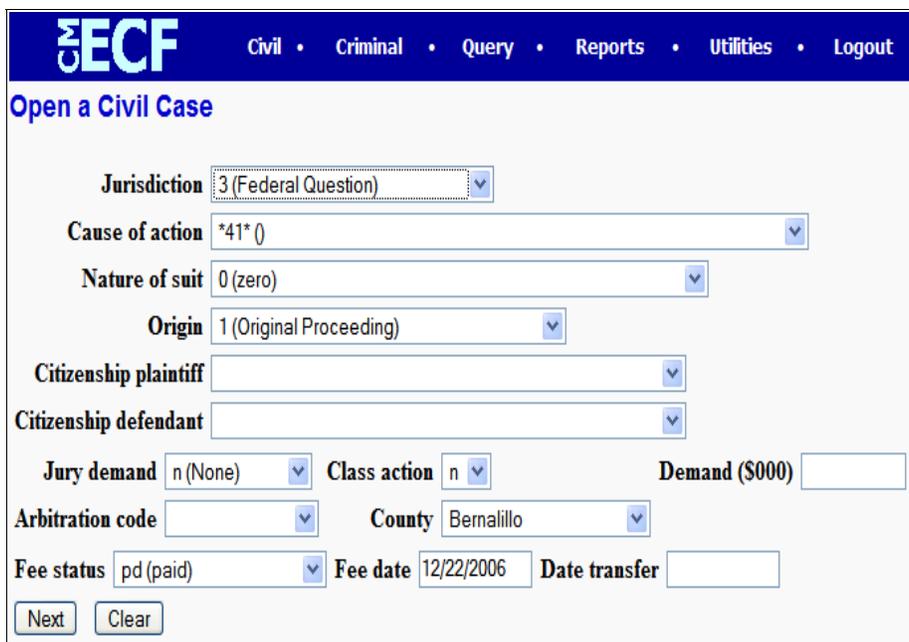
Leave the remaining fields with their default settings.

### For Court use only:

- **Case type** (mc - Miscellaneous Case)
- **Lead case number**
- **Association type**
- **Other court name**
- **Other court number**
- **Related Cases**

Click on the **[Next]** button to continue.

## Civil Cover Sheet Information



The screenshot shows the ECF Civil Case Opening Form. The header includes the ECF logo and navigation links: Civil, Criminal, Query, Reports, Utilities, and Logout. The main heading is "Open a Civil Case". The form contains several fields:

- Jurisdiction:** 3 (Federal Question)
- Cause of action:** \*41\* ()
- Nature of suit:** 0 (zero)
- Origin:** 1 (Original Proceeding)
- Citizenship plaintiff:** (empty)
- Citizenship defendant:** (empty)
- Jury demand:** n (None)
- Class action:** n
- Demand (\$000):** (empty)
- Arbitration code:** (empty)
- County:** Bernalillo
- Fee status:** pd (paid)
- Fee date:** 12/22/2006
- Date transfer:** (empty)

Buttons for "Next" and "Clear" are located at the bottom left of the form.

**Jurisdiction:** There are four options. The ECF system defaults to 3 (Federal Question) because it is the most common. Only if 4 (Diversity) is the proper Jurisdiction, will you be required to complete the Citizenship fields for both Plaintiff and Defendant. The other options are 1 (USA Plaintiff and 2 (USA Defendant).

**Cause of Action** and **Nature of Suit Codes** are located on the Civil Case Cover Sheet which you have already prepared with the Complaint. Please select appropriately.

**Origin Code:** There are two options to select from (*All other codes are for Court Use Only.*)

- 1 (Original Proceeding) is to be used when filing an original Complaint.
- 2 (Removal from State Court) is to be used when filing a Notice of Removal.

The **Citizenship fields** are not to be completed unless #4 (Diversity) was selected in the Jurisdiction field.

**Jury Demand:**

- n (None) if plaintiff does not wish a Jury Trial
- p (Plaintiff) if plaintiff wishes Jury Trial

If a Notice of Removal and the Jury Demand is known from the State Court proceeding:

- b (Both) if all parties wish a Jury
- d (Defendant) if only the defendant

**Class Action:** This option defaults *no* and should be left alone. The Court will determine the Class Action status of the case.

**Demand:** Enter dollar amount (in thousands of dollars) being demanded.

Example: \$100,000 = 100

**Arbitration Code:** Leave Blank

**County:** Select the county corresponding with the Cause of Action on initial Case Opening screen.

**Fee Status:**

- **pd (Paid)** if being paid on-line with this filing
- **fp (in forma pauperis)** if granted in State Court
- **pend (IFP pending)** if submitting a motion to proceed in forma pauperis with filing
- **wv (waived)** - for US Attorney use only

**Fee Date & Date Transfer:** Disregard

After entering all of the appropriate information, click on the **[Next]** button to continue.

## Party Search Screen

Begin adding the parties by first searching for the first Plaintiff. You may search for a name by entering as little as the first three letters of the last name. Click on the **[Search]** button to begin the search.



ECF Civil • Crim

### Open a Civil Case

Search for a party

Last/Business name

Enter all parties to the case in sequential order as listed in the complaint. It is recommended to enter all plaintiffs first, then all defendants.

### Selecting a Party From List

In this example, the party search located several options for our entry of "Smith."

If the name you are looking for appears in the list, select the name from the list by highlighting the preferred name, and click the **[Select name from list]** button. If the name does not appear in the list, click on the **[Create new party]** button. We will discuss both options with the *Select name from list* option first followed by the *Create new party* option.



ECF Civil • Criminal

### Search for a party

Last/Business name

### Party search results

- Smith
- Smith, Thomas L
- Smith, Adam
- Smith, Adolfo
- Smith, Agnes I
- Smith, Ahmin

When a name is selected from the list, a **Party Information** screen appears. This allows the user to enter pertinent information.

The screenshot shows the 'Party Information' form for 'Smith'. The form is titled 'ECF' and has a navigation bar with 'Civil', 'Criminal', 'Query', 'Reports', and 'Utilities'. The form fields are as follows:

- Title: [Text input]
- Role: Defendant (dftpty) [Dropdown]
- Pro se: no [Dropdown]
- Prisoner Id: [Text input]
- Unit: [Text input]
- Office: [Text input]
- Address 1: [Text input]
- Address 2: [Text input]
- Address 3: [Text input]
- City: [Text input]
- State: [Text input]
- Zip: [Text input]
- County: [Dropdown]
- Country: [Text input]
- Prison: Not Associated with Prison, ALDERSON [Dropdown]
- Populate Prison Address Lines: [Button]
- Phone: [Text input]
- Fax: [Text input]
- E-mail: [Text input]
- Party text: [Text input]
- Start date: 12/22/2006 [Text input]

Buttons at the bottom: Alias..., Corporate parent..., Review..., Add all aliases and corporate parents before clicking the Submit button., Submit, Cancel, Clear.

**NOTE:** Do **NOT** enter party address, phone or e-mail information. Do **NOT** enter your contact information either. All information added on this screen will be accessible to the public.

**Pro Se:** Do **NOT** change the designation.

**Role:** The role type defaults to *Defendant*. It is important to select the appropriate role type on this screen. View Role Type List.

**Party text:** Enter additional textual information here. For example, if you wanted to include a comment that the party is “*as an individual and as the president of company XYZ*”

**Aliases and Corporate Parents:** You must add aliases and corporate parent information before you [**Submit**] this information.

- Adding an Alias or Corporate Parent is similar to Searching and Selecting parties, or attorneys.
- Enter the name you wish to search, and click [**Search**]
- Highlight the name you wish to add, and click [**Select name from list**]
- or [**Create new alias**]
- Add a **Role Type**, and click [**Add alias**]

**ECF** Civil • Criminal • Query • Reports • Utilities • Logout 

**Alias Information (Party Smith, )**

Last/Business name  First name

Middle name  Generation

Role  Start date

Click the Add alias button to return to the Party screen and add more aliases, add attorneys or corporate parents, and submit all information for this party.

**ECF** Civil • Criminal • Query • Reports • Utilities • Logout 

**Corporate Parent Information (Party Smith, )**

Last/Business name  First name

Middle name  Start date

Click the Add corporate parent button to return to the Party screen and add more corporate parents, add attorneys or aliases, and submit all information for this party.

The **[Review]** button allows the user to view a quick list of the information already entered as to this party. After reviewing, click **[Return to Party Screen]** to continue entering information.

Click the **[Submit]** button to save the selected information for the party entered.

## Creating New Parties

What if a party is not found during a Party Search?

Many names and businesses are in the system, therefore, first search for your party in several ways to avoid duplicate entries. When you have determined that your party does not exist in the database you can click on **[Create new party]**.

Civil • Criminal • Query • Reports • Utilities • Logout

**Party Information**

|             |  |            |                                 |
|-------------|--|------------|---------------------------------|
| Last name   | <input type="text" value="Smith"/>   | First name | <input type="text"/>            |
| Middle name | <input type="text"/>   | Generation | <input type="text"/>            |
| Title       | <input type="text"/>   |            |                                 |
| Role        | <input type="text" value="Defendant (dft:pty)"/>   | Pro se     | <input type="text" value="no"/> |
| Prisoner Id | <input type="text"/>   | Unit       | <input type="text"/>            |
| Office      | <input type="text"/>   |            |                                 |
| Address 1   | <input type="text"/>   |            |                                 |
| Address 2   | <input type="text"/>   |            |                                 |
| Address 3   | <input type="text"/>   |            |                                 |
| City        | <input type="text"/>   | State      | <input type="text"/>            |
| County      | <input type="text"/>   | Country    | <input type="text"/>            |
| Prison      | <input type="text" value="Not Associated with Prison"/><br><input type="text" value="ALDERSON"/> |            |                                 |
|             | <input type="button" value="Populate Prison Address Lines"/>                                     |            |                                 |
| Phone       | <input type="text"/>   | Fax        | <input type="text"/>            |
| E-mail      | <input type="text"/>   |            |                                 |
| Party text  | <input type="text"/>   |            |                                 |
| Start date  | <input type="text" value="3/27/2007"/>   |            |                                 |

Add all attorneys, aliases and corporate parents before clicking the Submit button.

**NOTE:** Do **NOT** enter party address, phone or e-mail information. Do **NOT** enter your contact information either. All information added on this screen will be accessible to the public.

**Name:** Enter the parties name information. Include as much information as available. Enter business names in the Last Name box. Use the *Party text* to include additional text information (see below). Do **NOT** put this information as part of the parties name.

**Role:** The role type defaults to *Defendant*. It is important to select the appropriate role type on this screen. View Role Type List.

**Party text:** Enter additional textual information here. For example, if you wanted to include a comment that the party is “*as an individual and as the president of company XYZ*”. Do NOT include this information as part of the parties name.

You must add aliases and corporate parent information before you **[Submit]** this information.

### Aliases and Corporate Parents

- Adding an Alias or Corporate Parent is similar to Searching and Selecting parties, or attorneys.
- Enter the name you wish to search, and click **[Search]**
- Highlight the name you wish to add, and click **[Select name from list]**
- or create new alias
- Add a **Role Type**, and click **[Add alias]**

The **[Review]** button allows the user to view a quick list of the information already entered as to this party. After reviewing, click **[Return to Party Screen]** to continue entering information.

Click the **[Submit]** button to save the selected information for the party entered.

You will be returned to the *Search for a party* screen.

**DO NOT** click **[End party selection]** until **ALL** parties have been added. Once this button has been selected, you will not be able to return to enter additional parties.



The screenshot shows a web interface for the ECF (Electronic Case Filing) system. At the top, there is a blue header with the ECF logo and the text "Civil • Crim". Below the header, the main heading is "Open a Civil Case". Underneath, there is a section titled "Search for a party" which contains a text input field labeled "Last/Business name". Below the input field are two buttons: "Search" and "Clear". At the bottom of the search section is a button labeled "End party selection".

## Case Number Assignment

Once **[End Party Selection]** has been clicked, the Civil Case is officially opened and a civil case number is automatically assigned.



The final step in opening a new Civil Case is to Docket the Lead Event.

To immediately file the initiating document (a new complaint or notice of removal), click on the "**Docket Lead Event?**" hyperlink. This will allow you to electronically submit the complaint to the Court.

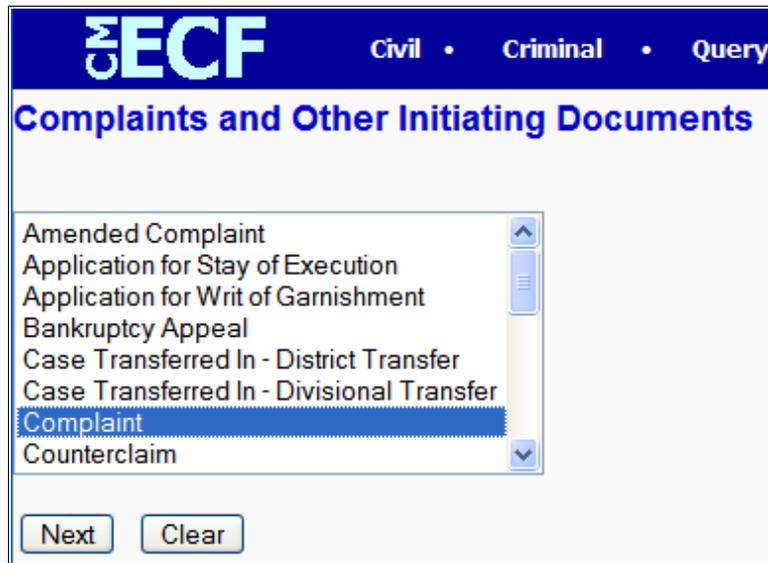
If you choose not to file the document immediately, which is discouraged, it is recommended that you write down or print this screen to remember the case number assigned.

If you elect to file at a different time from the case number assignment (again, not recommended) and forget the number assigned, please contact the Helpdesk to retrieve the case number. Do **NOT** open another case to get a new number.

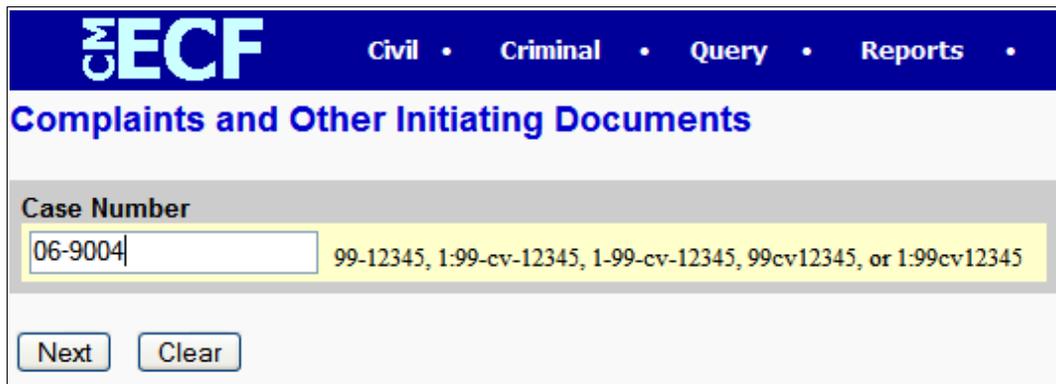
## Filing the Initiating Document

When the "**Docket Lead Event?**" hyperlink is clicked, ECF takes the user to the Complaints and Other Initiating Documents screen. (The filer can also find this event listing under the main **Civil** event menu.)

Highlight the appropriate option and click [Next].



If you choose to file the initiating document immediately after obtaining a case number, that case number will show up automatically in the case number box. If you chose to file at a later time, please verify the case number or enter in the correct case number and click [Next].



## Selecting Plaintiffs

This screen asks "Who is filing this complaint?"



The screenshot shows a web interface for the ECF system. At the top, there is a blue header with the ECF logo and navigation links for "Civil", "Criminal", and "Query". Below the header, the page title is "Complaints and Other Initiating Documents" with a sub-link "1:06-cv-09000 Smith". The main content area has the instruction "Select the filer." followed by "Select the Party:". A scrollable list box contains two entries: "Jones, Janet A. [Plaintiff]" and "Smith, William D., III [Defendant]". To the right of the list is a blue hyperlink "Add/Create New Party". At the bottom of the form are two buttons: "Next" and "Clear".

You can select multiple plaintiffs by pressing the control key, and clicking on each plaintiff name, multiple parties will be highlighted. **All** plaintiffs should be included as filers of this document.

Forgot to add a plaintiff during Case Opening? The filer may **Add/Create a New Party** (plaintiff) at this time. By clicking on the **Add/Create New Party** hyperlink, it will allow the user to add an additional party and will loop back to this screen to complete the docketing of the Lead Event.

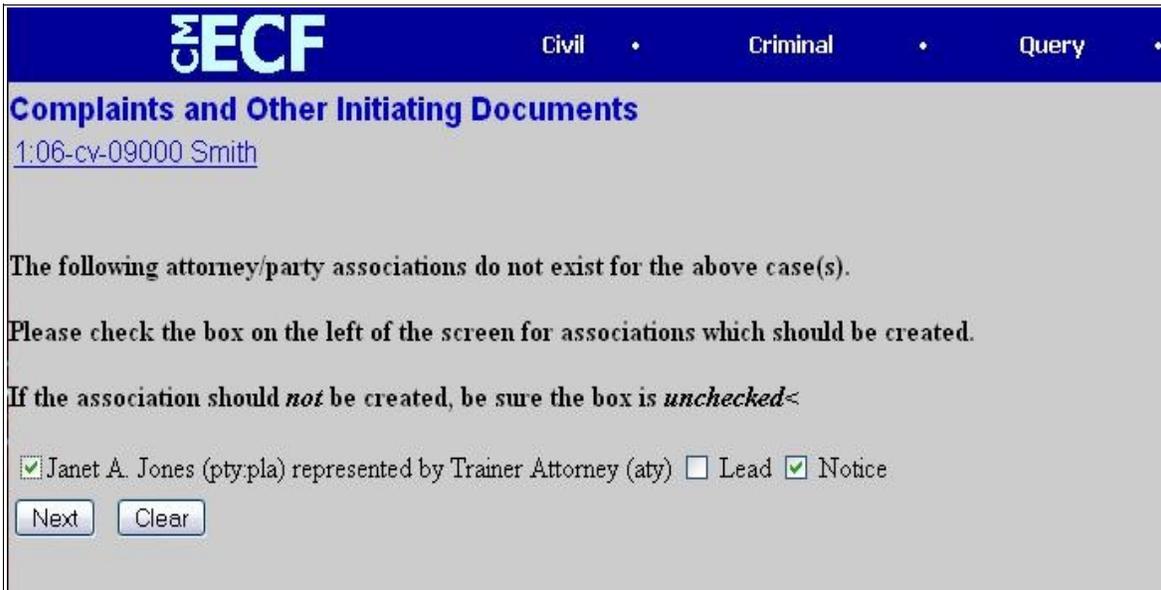
The screens presented for adding a party are identical to those shown during the case opening process.

Once all plaintiffs have been selected (added if appropriate), click on the **[Next]** button to continue.

## Party Association

The following screen is presented the first time a filer selects a party during a submission process. Once an attorney is associated to a particular party on a case this screen will not appear for subsequent filings.

The filing attorney needs to correctly associate themselves with the filing party. This ensures that notices of electronic filing will be served on the plaintiff's attorney for all parties indicated.



**ECF** Civil • Criminal • Query •

**Complaints and Other Initiating Documents**  
[1:06-cv-09000 Smith](#)

The following attorney/party associations do not exist for the above case(s).

Please check the box on the left of the screen for associations which should be created.

If the association should *not* be created, be sure the box is *unchecked*<

Janet A. Jones (pty:pla) represented by Trainer Attorney (aty)  Lead  Notice

**Association:** By checking the box filer is indicating that this party is being represented by the attorney currently logged in and is filing this document.

**Lead:** indicates that this attorney is to be identified as the Lead Counsel.

**Notice:** This is option is automatically checked. Do **NOT** deselect this box.

- Checking this box will ensure service of all documents filed via the Notice of Electronic Filing process through ECF.
- Deselecting this option will prevent all notices from being sent for this case.

Click on the [Next] button to continue.

## Selecting Defendants

The next screen asks "Who is the complaint filed against?" Again, highlight the appropriate defendants before continuing.

**CM/ECF** Civil • Criminal • Query • Report

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

[1:06-cv-09004 v. Smith](#)

Please select the party that this filing is against.

**Select the Party:**    **OR**    **Select a Group:**

Smith [Defendant]

[Add/Create New Party](#)

No Group  
 All Defendants  
 All Plaintiffs  
 All Parties

Next    Clear

If a party was missed during the initial case opening, there is an additional opportunity on this screen to add that defendant by clicking on the **Add/Create New Party** hyperlink.

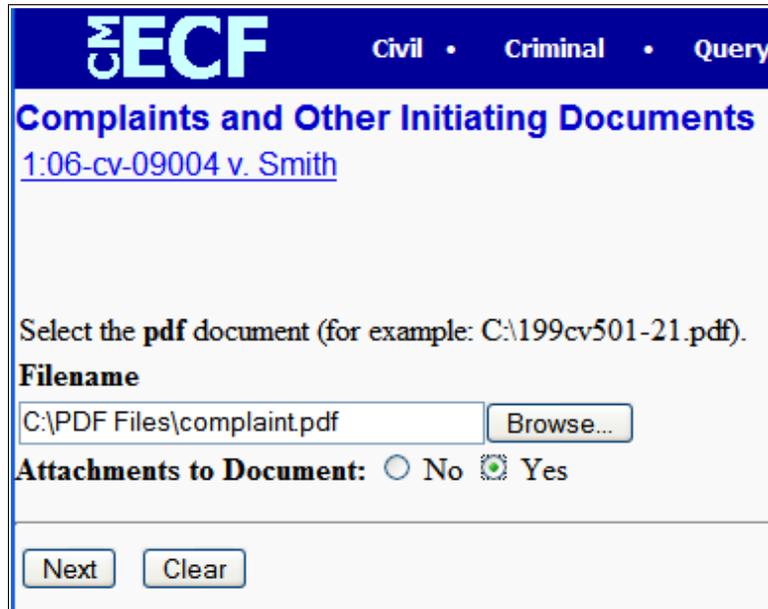
If there are many defendants, the filer may simply click ALL DEFENDANTS from the "**Select a Group**" list on the right side of the party listing. This saves scrolling through a large list of names to identify multiple parties and guarantees that all defendants are selected.

Once the parties have been selected (and added if appropriate), click on the **[Next]** button to continue.

## Attaching Initiating Document

Now that all parties are added and the plaintiffs/defendants identified, the filer may continue uploading the complaint to ECF.

On this screen, the filer "**Browses**" their own computer hard-drive or network drive to locate the PDF file that is the complaint to be filed.



The screenshot shows the CM/ECF web interface. At the top, there is a blue header with the CM/ECF logo and navigation links for Civil, Criminal, and Query. Below the header, the page title is "Complaints and Other Initiating Documents" and the case number "1:06-cv-09004 v. Smith" is displayed. The main content area contains the instruction "Select the pdf document (for example: C:\199cv501-21.pdf)." followed by a "Filename" label. Below this is a text input field containing "C:\PDF Files\complaint.pdf" and a "Browse..." button. Underneath the input field is the "Attachments to Document:" section with radio buttons for "No" and "Yes", where "Yes" is selected. At the bottom of the form are "Next" and "Clear" buttons.

Click **Browse** to begin searching for the file.

Once the complaint is added in this field, the user must attach the completed Civil Case Cover Sheet for the case. Select [**Yes**] for Attachments to Document and click [**Next**] to continue.

## Attaching Civil Cover Sheet and Other Documents

**MECF** Civil • Criminal • Query • Reports • Utilities • Logout 

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

[1:06-cv-09004 v. Smith](#)

**Select one or more attachments.**

1) Enter the **pdf** document that contains attachment (for example: C:\appendix.pdf).

**Filename**

C:\PDF Files\Case Cover Sheet.pdf

---

2) Before proceeding to step 3, describe the document using the Category list, the Description box, or both.

| Category   | Description          |
|--|----------------------|
| Civil Cover Sheet <input type="button" value="v"/> | <input type="text"/> |

3) Add the filename to the list box below. If you have more attachments, go back to Step 1. When the list of filenames is complete, click on the Next button.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| C:\PDF Files\Case Cover Sheet.pdf <input type="button" value="v"/> | <input type="button" value="Add to List"/> |
| <input type="button" value="Remove from List"/>                    |  |

The completed Case Cover Sheet is an attachment to the main complaint. This will allow the Court to perform the quality assurance review. You may also attach any relevant documents at this time.

**NOTE:** If you selected to proceed Informa Pauperis during the case opening process, you should also include the *Application to Proceed Informa Pauperis* as an attachment.

When all relevant documents have been attached, click on the **[Next]** button to continue.

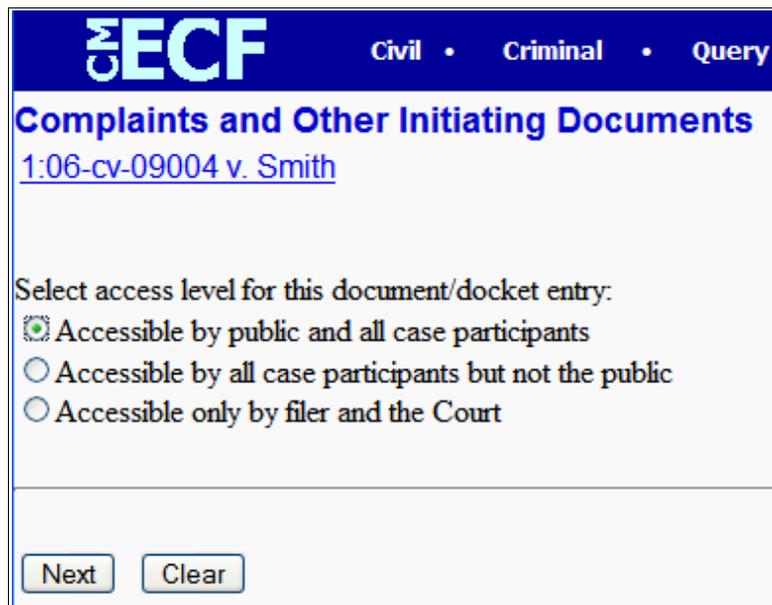
## Paying the Filing Fees

At this point, an information screen will appear indicating the filing fee for this case opening and how you wish to pay for the fee-based filing.

Please see the *CM/ECF Procedures for Making Online Payments* posted on our website at [www.nmcourt.fed.us](http://www.nmcourt.fed.us).

## Selecting a Restriction Level for the Documents Filed

Select the appropriate restriction level for the documents being filed. At this time the system cannot separately set the restriction levels for the different documents being submitted. The restriction level selected applies to the entire submission, the lead document and all attachments.



**CM/ECF** Civil • Criminal • Query

**Complaints and Other Initiating Documents**  
[1:06-cv-09004 v. Smith](#)

Select access level for this document/docket entry:

- Accessible by public and all case participants
- Accessible by all case participants but not the public
- Accessible only by filer and the Court

Next Clear

Click the **[Next]** button to continue.

## Descriptive Text and Final Review

On the Docket Text Modification screen the user may add any additional information necessary to the docket text. The text box will accept up to 256 characters. Do **NOT** use abbreviations.

The screenshot shows the ECF system interface. At the top is a blue navigation bar with the ECF logo and menu items: Civil, Criminal, Query, Reports, and Utilities. Below the navigation bar is a section titled "Complaints and Other Initiating Documents" with a link to "1:06-cv-09004 v. Smith". The main content area is titled "Docket Text: Modify as Appropriate." and contains a text input field with the text "COMPLAINT [ ] against Smith (Filing fee \$ 350.) . (Attachments: # (1) Civil Cover Sheet) (Pacer, Train)". Below the text input field are two buttons: "Next" and "Clear".

Click [Next] button to continue.

The Final Text screen is the last chance for the filer to review their submission. Once the [Next] button is clicked, the filing is submitted to the Court and immediately available on the docket sheet.

The screenshot shows the ECF system interface. At the top is a blue navigation bar with the ECF logo and menu items: Civil, Criminal, Query, Reports, and Utilities. Below the navigation bar is a section titled "Complaints and Other Initiating Documents" with a link to "1:06-cv-09004 v. Smith". The main content area is titled "Docket Text: Final Text" and contains a text input field with the text "COMPLAINT against Smith (Filing fee \$ 350.). (Attachments: # (1) Civil Cover Sheet)(Pacer, Train)". Below the text input field is a warning message: "Attention!! Pressing the NEXT button on this screen commits this transaction. You will have no further opportunity to modify this transaction if you continue." Below the warning message are two buttons: "Next" and "Clear".

## Notice of Electronic Filing

The Notice of Electronic Filing (NEF) is displayed to the filer, which constitutes the filing receipt for this transaction. It is recommended that the filer save and/or print this page.

CM/ECFCivil • Criminal • Query • Reports • Utilities • Logout?

### Complaints and Other Initiating Documents

1:07-cv-00217 v. Smith

**U.S. District Court**  
**District of New Mexico - Version 3.0**

#### Notice of Electronic Filing

The following transaction was entered by Helpdesk, Attorney on 3/27/2007 at 5:39 PM MDT and filed on 3/27/2007

**Case Name:** v. Smith  
**Case Number:** [1:07-cv-217](#)  
**Filer:** Albert Brown  
Aaron T Jones  
**Document Number:** [1](#)

**Docket Text:**  
COMPLAINT against Aaron T Jones, Smith (Filing fee \$ 350.), filed by Albert Brown.(Helpdesk, Attorney)

**1:07-cv-217 Notice has been electronically mailed to:**

**1:07-cv-217 Notice has been delivered by other means to:**

The following document(s) are associated with this transaction:

**Document description:**Main Document  
**Original filename:**n/a  
**Electronic document Stamp:**  
[STAMP dcecfStamp\_ID=1160582788 [Date=3/27/2007] [FileNumber=829406-0]  
[68bf6427ae19958c093429ed3aa923821172c9c28cab14af7e0dfae639dd20c2d2cd  
62f498c8486afb8bde6c3fa823d7307d1f86dcb9ecf776e6b627e55d04f0]]

## Summons

Once the complaint has been process and the filing fee received (if appropriate), a judge will then be assigned to the case. Once a judge is assigned, the filer of the complaint should submit any summons for processing.

Templates for the summons form are available on our website at [www.nmcourt.fed.us](http://www.nmcourt.fed.us). The filer should use the available template to create a separate PDF document for each summons to be issued.

Once a summons for each defendant is prepared, ready for issuance by the Court, they should be e-mailed to [summons@nmcourt.fed.us](mailto:summons@nmcourt.fed.us) in a single email.

When the Court performs the quality assurance review, the summons will be watermarked electronically by the Court. The issued summons will then be e-mailed back to the attorney for service via the email that was used to submit the summons.

If any problems arise, personnel from the court will contact you to provide further instructions.