



City of Yakima

News Release

Subject: Yakima Municipal Court in-person appearances

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Yakima Municipal Court plans phased-in resumption of in-person court appearances

Yakima Municipal Court is phasing-in resumption of in-person hearings and jury trials at the City of Yakima's Richard A. Zais, Jr. Law and Justice Center, 200 S. 3rd Street.

The Court is following prevailing public health guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Washington State Department of Health and the Yakima Health District.

Modifications to the facility include:

- Requiring facial coverings;
- Social distancing as marked by floor and courtroom seating decals;
- Installation of numerous hand sanitizing stations;
- Signage concerning public health guidelines to be observed;
- Installation of plexiglass barriers at the clerk's station in the courtrooms

The following protocols will be in place for:

Criminal Cases:

- Beginning Wednesday, September 9th, court appearances will be staggered based on the capacity of each courtroom to safely accommodate 9 to 11 individuals in the audience.
 - Out of custody arraignments will be heard mornings at 9:30, 10:00 and 10:30 am
 - Status conferences will be heard afternoons at 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 pm, and Friday mornings at 8:30 am
- Virtual hearings may be scheduled by a defendant's lawyer via
 - Zoom
 - Telephone
- It is anticipated that jury selection will be conducted at the Yakima Convention Center, 10 North 8th Street, to accommodate social distancing of jury pools with 30 to 40 potential jurors. Once the panel of six jurors is selected, the trial will be conducted at Yakima Municipal Court with strict adherence to public safety measures. It is anticipated that jury trials will start in October.

Infractions:

- The Court encourages those with traffic or animal infractions to submit an electronic explanation via the Court's website. Visit <https://www.yakimawa.gov/services/municipal-court/> and click Infraction options.
- The Court will also consider written explanations mailed through U.S. Postal Service.
- In-person hearings will be accommodated, but only at the rate of 9 people in the court at a time beginning every 30 minutes from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm. Infraction dockets typically have 50 to 75 cases scheduled.

Notices for both criminal and infractions hearings will have specific appearance times and instructions to court users as to how hearings will be conducted in compliance with public health guidelines.

Customer service windows:

- Normal hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 11:00am and 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm.
- Social distancing of six feet between individuals
- Hand sanitizer at the counter
- Court Clerk available by telephone at 575-3050 Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

Payments:

- Telephone, 575-3050
- Mail:
Richard Zais Justice Center
200 South 3rd Street
Yakima, WA 98901
- In-person

Access to the Public

Courts have constitutional and statutory duties to provide access to justice. All court proceedings are live-streamed via Zoom and accessed through the court's website to further ensure public access to the Municipal Court during the pandemic. Live streaming is the least restrictive means available for protecting the public, the parties, and court staff. More on live-streaming of court proceedings is available at <https://www.yakimawa.gov/services/municipal-court/live-streaming/>

Yakima Municipal Court established emergency measures in March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including continuing in-person hearings and jury trials. These modifications to court operations were based upon Supreme Court orders designed to protect the public, the parties and court staff from acquiring or transmitting COVID-19.

The Court continues to review and revise court operations in response to evolving COVID-19 epidemiology.