



ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER RCTC-AO-2026-01

RINCON CIVIL TRIAL COURT

VIRTUAL TRIAL COURT PROCEDURES

1. **Purpose and Scope**

(a) **Purpose:** The purpose of this Order is the establishment of uniform procedures governing virtual trials in the Rincon Civil Trial Court.

(b) **Scope:** The provisions of this order/policy govern all virtual trials.

(c) **Authority:** This Order is issued pursuant to the inherent authority of the court to regulate proceedings before it and to ensure the fair, orderly, and efficient administration of justice.

2. **Technology Standards.** All participants must use a device with a functioning camera, microphone, and stable internet connection. Participants must install the most recent version of Zoom. Backup access (phone-in number or alternate device) must be available. The court retains ultimate authority over all technological aspects of the proceeding, including platform controls.

3. **Pre-Trial Tech Check.** Parties, counsel, and witnesses must complete a technology test on the date ordered by the court at the Trial Readiness Conference. Court staff will verify audio, video, screen-sharing capability, and naming conventions.

4. **Notice and Service.** The court will issue a Virtual Appearance Notice containing Zoom access instructions.

5. **Entry and Identification:** Participants enter through the Zoom waiting room. The court clerk verifies identity and renames participants using the required format: Role – Last Name (e.g., Plaintiff Counsel – Doe).

6. **Decorum:** Cameras must remain on unless excused by the court. All participants must appear in professional attire and use neutral backgrounds (blurring is acceptable). The court clerk will control muting to maintain order.



7. **Trial Structure.** Opening statements may include visual aids via screen-sharing if pre-approved by the judge. Visual aids must be shown to the court and the other party(ies) prior to use. Counsel must announce transitions between direct, cross, and redirect. The judge may ask questions at any time.

8. **Exhibits.**

(a) Digital Exhibit Submission. Each party must provide an exhibit list (joint or individually) and exchange and submit all digital exhibits by the dates ordered by the court at the Trial Readiness Conference. Exhibits must be pre-marked and submitted in PDF or approved digital format (Plaintiff using numbers and Defense using letters). Videos or multimedia must be in a court-compatible format (TBD). Each party must ensure all of its exhibits are accessible to opposing counsel and the court prior to trial.

(b) Presentation of Exhibits. Exhibits may be presented via screen-share or by reference to pre-submitted digital files. Counsel must clearly identify exhibit numbers and page references on the record.

(c) Physical Evidence. Physical items must be digitized when possible. Physical items that cannot be digitized must be shown on camera and the witness must display the item clearly and slowly for the record.

9. **Witnesses**

(a) Disclosure of Witnesses. Each party must disclose remote witnesses, including contact information, to the other party(ies) and the court by the date ordered at the Case Management Conference or Trial Readiness Conference.

(b) Oath and Verification. Witnesses will be sworn in remotely by the court clerk. Witness must state their physical location and confirm they are alone. Witnesses must pan their camera to show the room.

(c) Preventing Coaching: Witnesses may not use notes unless authorized by the court. No off-camera communication is permitted. Opposing counsel may request the witness to show their workspace at any time. Witnesses shall not have access to any other electronic device, messaging platform, or communication tool during testimony. Use of generative artificial intelligence or real-time assistance tools during testimony is prohibited.

(d) Testimony: Witnesses shall be permitted in the Zoom proceeding only during his/her testimony. Witnesses present prior to their testimony shall be placed in the waiting room or a breakout room. Proceedings will pause if audio or video quality prevents accurate record-making.

(e) Interpreters. Interpreters, if required, will be pinned on-screen.



10. **Objections.** Objections must be made verbally. The judge may mute all participants except the objecting party. The judge will rule on the objection before testimony continues.
11. **Breaks and Sidebars:** Attorney-client conferences will occur in private breakout rooms. Virtual sidebars may be conducted via breakout rooms or temporary removal of observers. Lunch breaks will be provided generally around Noon to 1:00 p.m., taking into consideration the flow of testimony. Rest breaks will also be provided. Typically such breaks will occur approximately every 1-2 hours; however, breaks will be determined by the judge so as to not unduly interrupt the presentation of witness testimony.
12. **Record Integrity.** Speakers must identify themselves before speaking. Cross-talk is prohibited; the court clerk may mute parties to avoid cross-talk. Exhibit references must be clear and specific.
13. **Record Preservation.** Digital exhibits and Zoom recordings will be stored in the case file in Egnyte.
14. **Recording of Proceedings.** Unauthorized recording is prohibited. Only the court's official recording method is permitted.
15. **Court Reporters.** If a party elects to hire a private court reporter, that party must disclose its intention to do so, along with the name and contact information of the court reporter, at the Trial Readiness Conference or on the date set forth by the judge at the Trial Readiness Conference. The parties should coordinate to avoid the use of multiple court reporters. The use of a private court reporter is for convenience of the party(ies) only. The court reporter's transcript is not the official court record. In the event of any discrepancy, the court's official recording shall control.
16. **Violations and Sanctions.** Failure to comply with this Order may result in sanctions, including but not limited to: exclusion of evidence, striking of testimony, monetary sanctions, or other relief deemed appropriate by the court.

IT IS SO ORDERED

Date: April 17, 2026

Kathryn A. Ogas
Kathryn A. Ogas
Chief Judge
Rincon Civil Trial Court