

## **Civil Jury Trial Memorandum**

Courtroom 43

Ventura County Superior Court

Judge Kevin G. DeNoce

The following practices and procedures are to be followed in conducting civil jury trials before Judge Kevin G. DeNoce. Counsel are ordered to read and adhere to these rules. **The court requires that trial counsel sign a copy of these rules acknowledging that you have read them and file a signed copy of these rules with the court (or email a signed copy to the court) five court days prior to the first day of trial.** You may email a signed copy to the court at [courtroom43@ventura.courts.ca.gov](mailto:courtroom43@ventura.courts.ca.gov) Additional information regarding Judge DeNoce's trial rules and procedures can be found at: <http://www.ventura.courts.ca.gov/Courtroom/C43>

### **Court Trial Court Hours:**

**Jury trials are conducted from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday. Trials are not in session on Mondays since that is a law and motion day for the court.** The court recesses from noon to 1:30 p.m. Counsel are expected to arrive in the courtroom fifteen minutes before each session is to begin (9:45 a.m. and 1:15 p.m.) **Once trial begins, counsel should expect to be in session Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. until the trial is completed. If counsel cannot commit to this schedule, it must be brought to the court's attention before jury selection begins.** The court expects that there will not be interruptions (down time) in the trial and that each counsel will have their witnesses ready so that the jury is not waiting. Do not expect the court or jury to wait if witnesses are late. Counsel should be present in court at least ten minutes before court is to convene on each day we are in session.

### **Counsel's Duty to Meet and Confer 7 days Prior to Trial:**

At least 7 calendar days prior to the first day of trial, counsel are ordered to meet and confer telephonically (1) to prepare a joint witness list and joint statement of the case; (2) to identify legal and factual issues which may be resolved through stipulation; (3) to identify exhibits which may be admitted into evidence by way of stipulation; (4) to ensure compliance with Code of Civil Procedure section 2025.340(m) concerning use of audio or video recordings of depositions, where applicable; (5) to provide a list of jury instructions to the court; (6) to provide a jury verdict form to the court; (7) to prepare exhibit binders and deposition transcripts for the court; and (8) to discuss scheduling issues and arrive at a reliable time estimate for the trial to be conveyed to the jury panel.

### **Trial Documents To Be Served & Filed 5 Calendar Days Before Trial:**

At least 5 calendar days prior to the first day of trial, the parties shall serve and file (with the Judicial Assistant in courtroom 43), the following trial documents:

- 1.) A Trial Brief not exceeding 20 pages which identifies the claims and defenses subject to litigation; the major legal issues (with supporting points and authorities); the relief

claimed and calculation of damages sought. In addition to filing your trial brief, please email a copy to the court at: courtroom43@ventura.courts.ca.gov

- 2.) **Motions in limine: Counsel are permitted to file no more than 10 motions in limine on each side.** If you believe you have good cause to file additional motions in limine you must file a supporting motion and declaration. **The parties are ordered to create a working courtesy copy of all motions in limine (in support and opposition) in three-ring binders which must be lodged with the court 5 calendar days prior to the first day of trial in addition to filing hard copies.** Counsel are to provide the court with organized binders of courtesy copies of the moving, opposition, and reply memoranda for its motions *in limine* in three-ring binders. Please place the papers for each motion behind a numbered tab and use additional tabs or colored paper to separate each moving, opposition and reply memorandum. Before and after filing motions *in limine*, the parties shall meet and confer in an effort to (1) reach stipulations resolving disputes over the admissibility of evidence and (2) limit the contested motions *in limine* to a manageable number for the Court to decide. Please remember that motions asking the court to exclude large categories of evidence (e.g., “all evidence not disclosed in discovery”) are not appropriate for adjudication *in limine*. The Court cannot decide whether a party unfairly withheld information in discovery until it receives an offer of specific evidence, an objection to that evidence, the discovery requests asking for the specific evidence, and the objections raised by the responding party. Please also recognize that in many cases, the Court is not in a position, at the outset of trial, before hearing preliminary or foundational evidence, to issue an order excluding evidence *in limine*. When that is the case, please file a bench brief addressing the evidentiary issue rather than a motion *in limine*. In addition to filing your motions *in limine*, please email a copy to the court at: courtroom43@ventura.courts.ca.gov
- 3.) **Joint Jury Statement: For jury trials only, the parties shall file a joint statement of the case to be read to the jury panel at the outset of jury selection. This statement should be a neutral, concise factual statement of the case not exceeding two pages.** (See, Ventura County Superior Court Rules, Rule 8.12(G).) Alternatively, the parties may agree to provide Mini-Opening Statements (five minutes or less per side). In addition to filing your Joint Jury Statement, please email a copy to the court at: courtroom43@ventura.courts.ca.gov
- 4.) **Joint Witness List:** The parties shall file a joint list of all witnesses that each party intends to call. The joint witness list shall identify each witness by name, each expert witness, the expected length (in tenths of an hour) of the direct and cross examination of each witness, and any potential scheduling problems or special requirements. Please total the number of hours so that the Court can estimate the total length of trial. Any party who seeks to elicit testimony from a witness who was not identified on the joint witness list must make a showing of good cause. In addition to filing a Joint Witness List, please email a copy to the court at: courtroom43@ventura.courts.ca.gov
- 5.) **Jury Instructions:** The parties shall jointly prepare and file a list of jury instructions and a complete set of full-text proposed jury instructions and prepare special instructions in a format suitable for submission to the jury. If a joint list of jury instructions cannot be agreed upon, each party must file a separate list of instructions. **In addition to filing a list of proposed jury instructions, please email a copy of the complete content of**

**your jury instructions to the court on or before the first day of trial:**

courtroom43@ventura.courts.ca.gov

- 6.) If there is a request to use a written jury questionnaire, a copy must be emailed and filed with the court 5 calendar days before the trial commences. Any proposed questionnaire must be at least 12 point font and not exceed 12 pages.
- 7.) Joint Verdict Form: The parties shall prepare and jointly file a proposed general or special verdict form. If the parties cannot agree on a joint verdict form, each party must separately file a proposed verdict form. **In addition to filing your proposed verdict form, please email a copy of your proposed verdict form to the court on or before the first day of trial:** courtroom43@ventura.courts.ca.gov
- 8.) Estimated Trial Length: **Five days prior to trial, counsel must email the court an accurate time estimate for the trial which takes into consideration time for jury selection, presentation of evidence, any potential bifurcated phase, and at least one day of deliberations.** In providing your time estimate, error on the side of a longer estimate in order to avoid losing jurors and a potential mistrial. Since the court prequalifies jurors for hardship, the court needs this time estimate prior to the first day of jury selection in order to prepare a hardship declaration that will be sent to jury services the day before jury selection begins.

**Documents to Be Lodged With The Court On The First Day of Trial:**

- 1.) Trial Exhibit Binders: The parties shall jointly prepare, and be fully prepared to lodge with the court on the first day of trial, three sets of tabbed, internally paginated and properly marked exhibits, organized numerically in three-ring binders (a set for the court, the Judicial Assistant and the witnesses). The parties shall mark non-documentary exhibits and insert a simple written description of the exhibit behind the corresponding numerical tab in the exhibit binder.
- 2.) Transcripts of Depositions: Copies of deposition transcripts which may be read or referred to at trial must be lodged with the court on the first day of trial.

**Jury Selection:**

The court prequalifies jurors for hardship by having the jurors in the Jury Assembly room fill out a declaration indicating whether they can serve on a case of the anticipated length of this trial. This is done before the jurors are brought into the courtroom. Generally, the court brings a panel of 70 prospective jurors into the courtroom at a time and does not use a “six pack” method. The court uses a PowerPoint during jury selection to inform jurors of their duties, admonitions, and the information set forth in CACI 100-114. If counsel wishes to see a copy of the court’s jury selection PowerPoint, please ask the court’s judicial assistant prior to the jury panel being summoned to the courtroom. The court also uses a standard Jury Questionnaire in its examination of prospective jurors. A copy of this questionnaire is available on the court’s web page:  
<http://www.ventura.courts.ca.gov/Courtroom/C43>

Voir dire conducted by counsel should be brief and not directed to any improper purpose. The court may limit time for examination by counsel. [See Ventura County Superior Court Rules, Rule 8.12(C)(1).]

The court will take challenges for cause at sidebar (or otherwise outside the hearing of the jury).

### **Stating Objections During The Trial:**

**The court does not permit speaking objections. Simply state the grounds for your objection, i.e., hearsay, lack of foundation, etc.** If counsel wishes to argue about a ruling it will be done at the bench or on the record outside the presence of the jury. Objections made before the jury shall state the legal basis only. Do not argue objections in the jury's presence unless invited by the court. [See Ventura County Superior Court Rules, Rule 8.12(C)(2).] **Counsel objecting on “*Kennemur*” grounds is obligated to give advance notice of such objection and provide the court with a sufficient record to rule on the objection as soon as counsel reasonably anticipates that such an objection may be forthcoming.** Counsel opposing a *Kennemur* objection has the burden of showing the court where in the deposition/declaration the expert disclosed the opinion being objected to. Counsel should be mindful that the court is not in a position to know whether an expert opinion was disclosed prior to trial unless counsel provides the court with a sufficient record for the court to make that determination. Counsel should not expect the court to keep a jury waiting while the court is asked to read a voluminous deposition in order to rule on an unnoticed *Kennemur* objection.

### **Witnesses:**

Counsel must have sufficient witnesses present each day of trial to avoid delay. Each counsel shall notify (by way of email) the court and opposing counsel by 6 p.m. the evening before, as to what witnesses will be called the following day except for witnesses offered solely for impeachment. **This email list of witnesses is to be emailed to opposing counsel and the court by no later than 6 p.m. on the day prior to witnesses being called to testify.** Failure to follow this rule may result in exclusion of any witness not so disclosed. [See Ventura County Superior Court Rules, Rule 8.12(C)(1).] Counsel are expected to accommodate each other when a need arises to call a witness out of order.

The standing order of the court is to exclude witnesses (including experts) from the trial, unless counsel request otherwise. Counsel are expected to inform witnesses of this order. Counsel must also advise their witnesses not to discuss their testimony with any other witness during the trial, including after the witness testifies.

**Questioning of witnesses shall be done from outside the well and away from the witness stand unless necessary to cover exhibits or diagrams being referenced by the witness.** Before approaching a witness, counsel should ask for the court's permission. Counsel should inquire of the court before approaching the witness stand. **Counsel should promptly return**

**to counsel table once it is no longer necessary to be beside the witness.** Do not admonish a witness while the witness is testifying; you may request that the court admonish the witness.

### **Exhibits:**

**Although the court requests that exhibits be pre-marked, counsel should only mark as exhibits items you intend to move into evidence. Do not mark numerous pages as an exhibit if you only intend to move some of those pages into evidence. Stated otherwise, only mark as an exhibit the pages that you will be moving into evidence. Electronic exhibits (CDs of documents, etc.) cannot be admitted in place of hard copies. The Court will need a hard copy of exhibits for the jury, Court, and Judicial Assistant and counsel must provide them to the Court on the first day of trial. Please give your exhibits to the Judicial Assistant prior to jury selection and have them pre-marked before jury selection is completed.**

When counsel wishes to use an exhibit not produced and marked at the commencement of trial, counsel should disclose the exhibit to opposing counsel and produce it to the judicial assistant at the earliest opportunity, preferably while the jury is not in the box.

In publishing exhibits to the jury, they shall be handed to the bailiff who will provide the exhibit to the jury. Counsel should not display an exhibit to the jury which has not been admitted into evidence without prior approval of the court. Counsel using a document presentation system shall identify on the record by exhibit number an exhibit to be displayed before showing it to the jury.

Once an exhibit is marked, it shall not leave the courtroom regardless as to whether it is received into evidence. At each break and at the end of the day, all marked exhibits are to be handed back to the judicial assistant to ensure that they do not get lost or mistakenly taken out of the courtroom by counsel or a witness.

### **PowerPoints, Charts & Visual Displays:**

PowerPoints, slides, charts, and exhibits intended to be referenced in opening statements or closing arguments must be shown to opposing counsel at least thirty minutes prior to their presentation during opening statement or closing argument. Counsel must provide a hard copy of any PowerPoint to the court and opposing counsel at least thirty minutes before its use. Opposing counsel must inform the court at least fifteen minutes prior to use, of any objection to a PowerPoint, slide, chart, or exhibit which is to be taken up outside the presence of the jury. **In order for there to be an appellate record as to what was displayed to the jury and what was objected to, counsel must provide the court with a printed hard copy of any PowerPoint or Chart which must be marked as a court exhibit before being presented in court.**

No reenactment, experiment, graphic demonstration, comparison, exemplar, or physical display of a party or witness shall be conducted during the trial without giving at least one court day advance notice to the court and opposing counsel so that a hearing can occur outside the presence of the jury.

**Persons Assisting And Associated With Counsel During Trial:**

Other than the parties and trial counsel, no persons are permitted in front of the bar separating the audience from counsel table unless expressly permitted by the court. If “assistants” for either side wish to sit at counsel table, please provide the name of your assistant to the court clerk and introduce your assistant to the court. Assistants and co-counsel that are sitting at trial counsel table should not come and go from the courtroom during session as it is distracting to the jury.

**Counsel are to instruct their clients, witnesses, family members, and anyone else attending court with them, of motion *in limine* rulings, the rules of the court, how to behave on the witness stand, to pause for objections, not to argue with the questioner, and NOT to converse with jurors. Further, these persons are to be instructed by counsel that they are not to converse in any manner within hearing distance of the jurors.**

Counsel will advise their clients, family members, friends and witnesses that head nodding, grimaces, eye rolling, and other unnecessary gestures in response to testimony, argument, or a court ruling will not be tolerated, and may result in the court giving a curative admonition before the jury.

**Entering the Well:**

Questioning of witnesses shall be done from outside the well and away from the witness stand unless necessary to cover exhibits or diagrams being referenced by the witness.

Opening statement and closing argument shall only be presented from behind your counsel table, the podium in the well, and the area of the well directly in front of the jury box. Opening statement and closing argument shall not be presented from the witness stand or beyond the bar in front of the jury box. Counsel shall not make contact with or pass the bar in front of the jury box or ask the jury any questions such as whether they can see a diagram, exhibit, chart, Powerpoint, etc.

**Sidebar Conferences:**

Sidebar conferences are not reported. A party wishing to memorialize any unreported proceedings “on the record” will, upon request, have the opportunity to do so outside the presence of the jury at a time designated by the court.

**Jury Instructions & Verdict Forms:**

**A list of all jury instructions requested by all parties along with a full content copy shall be filed and emailed to the court five days prior to the commencement of jury selection. In providing jury instructions to the court, counsel should make any proposed substantive additions, select appropriate gender, and insert appropriate names, BUT NOT REMOVE ANY OPTIONAL (BRACKETED) language from the CACI instructions.** This is to insure that opposing counsel and the court do not miss any optional language that the court/opposing counsel believes should be included. These complete instructions must be emailed to the court prior to commencement of the trial. By emailing all jury instructions to the court along with the proposed verdict form, the court can make changes to these in the courtroom after input from counsel. A copy of the final jury instructions and verdict form will then be emailed back to counsel prior to closing arguments.

The court generally does not pre-instruct on substantive issues of law. If counsel desires to have the court pre-instruct on an area of law or if counsel wishes to question prospective jurors regarding any legal principles, such notice shall be given by way of motion filed and served at least five (5) court days prior to the commencement of trial.

**Counsel for all sides must provide the court with a proposed verdict form at least five days prior to the commencement of jury selection. The court requests that you submit the verdict form to the court by way of email and also file a hard copy with the court. By providing the court with an electronic/emailed copy, changes to the verdict form can be made in the courtroom if necessary. In emailing the court, always remember to copy all parties/counsel on the email so as to avoid any *ex parte* communications with the court.**

#### **Unanticipated Issues That Arise During The Trial:**

If unanticipated motions need to be made during the trial (motions *in limine*, 402, foundation, etc.), both opposing counsel and the court shall be notified immediately as opposed to raising the matter first thing in the morning or afternoon shortly before the jury comes back. If such a motion comes to mind after hours, opposing counsel and the court shall be notified after hours by email and all counsel shall be in court at 9:00 a.m. on the following court day to address the matter. All counsel are ordered to exchange email addresses and telephone numbers so they can confer both during and after court hours. Counsel should not expect to keep the jury waiting while seeking to litigate an unnoticed motion.

#### **“DOE” Defendants:**

The court will, without further notice, dismiss all fictitiously named defendants at the close of the evidence.

#### **Policy Concerning Food and Drink:**

Counsel may consume drinks in the courtroom. Food is not permitted in the courtroom absent medical necessity.

**Trial Attorneys' Duty While the Jury is Deliberating:**

While the jury is deliberating, counsel and the parties are to be available to physically return to the courtroom within thirty (30) minutes of a telephone call in order to receive a verdict, answers questions of the jury, or provide read back of testimony. Please provide the clerk with a cell phone number where you can be reached.

I have read and understand the foregoing and agree to be bound by the above rules.

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Counsel (print)  
Plaintiff/Defendant

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Signature

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