

Rule 521. Removal (Appeal) to District Court

(a) Trial de novo. Any person aggrieved by an order for judgment entered in conciliation court after contested trial may remove the cause to district court for trial de novo (new trial). An "aggrieved person" may be either the judgment debtor or creditor.

(b) Removal Procedure. To effect removal, the aggrieved party must perform all the following within 21 days after the date the court administrator transmitted to that party notice of the judgment order:

(1) Serve a demand for removal of the cause to district court by first class mail upon every opposing counsel or self-represented litigant. Service may also be by personal service in accordance with the provisions for personal service of a summons in district court. Service shall be by electronic means under Rule 14 if both the counsel or party serving the demand and the counsel or party to be served have agreed to or are required to accept electronic service under Rule 14. The demand for removal shall state whether trial demanded is to be by court or jury, and shall indicate the name, address, and telephone number of the aggrieved party's lawyer, if any. If the aggrieved party is a corporation, the demand for removal must be signed by the party's attorney.

(2) File with the court administrator of district court in a new civil file separate from the conciliation court file the original demand for removal with proof of service. The aggrieved party may file with the court administrator within the 21-day period the original demand together with an affidavit by the party or the party's lawyer showing that after due and diligent search the opposing party or opposing party's lawyer cannot be located. This affidavit shall serve in lieu of making service and filing proof of service. When an affidavit is filed, the court administrator shall mail the copy of the demand to the opposing party at the party's last known residence address.

(3) File with the court administrator of district court in a new civil file separate from the conciliation court file an affidavit by the aggrieved party or that party's lawyer stating that the removal is made in good faith and not for purposes of delay. The affidavit may be combined on the same form with the demand under part (2).

(4) Except as otherwise provided by law, pay to the court administrator of district court in a new civil file separate from the conciliation court file as the fee for removal the amount prescribed by law for filing a civil action in district court, and if a jury trial is demanded under Rule 521(b)(1) of these rules, pay to the court administrator the amount prescribed by law for requesting a jury trial in a civil action in district court. A party who is unable to pay the fees may apply for permission to proceed without payment of fees pursuant to the procedure set forth in Minnesota Statutes, section 563.01.

(c) Demand for Jury Trial. Where no jury trial is demanded on removal under Rule 521(b) by the aggrieved party, if the opposing party desires a jury trial that party shall perform all the following within 21 days after the demand for removal was served on the party or lawyer:

(1) Serve a jury trial demand by first class mail upon every opposing counsel or self-represented litigant. Service may also be by personal service in accordance with the provisions for personal service of a summons in district court. Service shall be by electronic means under Rule 14 if both the counsel or party serving the demand and the counsel or party to be served have agreed to or are required to accept electronic service under Rule 14.

(2) File the jury trial demand and proof of service with the court administrator of district court.

(3) Pay to the court administrator of district court the amount prescribed by law for requesting a jury trial in a civil action in district court and, if the demand is the first document filed by the party in the district court proceeding, pay to the administrator the amount prescribed by law for filing a civil action in district court. A party who is unable to pay the fees may apply for permission to proceed without payment of fees pursuant to the procedure set forth in Minnesota Statutes, section 563.01.

(d) Removal Perfected; Vacating Judgment; Transmitting File. When all removal documents have been filed properly and all requisite fees paid as provided under Rule 521(b), the removal is perfected, and the court shall issue an order vacating the order for judgment in conciliation court as to the parties to the removal, and the pertinent portions of the conciliation court file of the cause shall be filed in district court.

(e) Limited Removal.

(1) When a motion for vacation of an order for judgment, or judgment under Rule 520 (a) or (b) of these rules, is denied, the aggrieved party may demand limited removal to the district court for hearing de novo (new hearing) on the motion. Procedure for service and filing of the demand for limited removal and notice of hearing de novo, proof of service of the notice, and procedure in case of inability of the aggrieved party to make service on the opposing party or the opposing party's lawyer shall be in the same manner prescribed in part (b) of this rule, except that the deadline for effecting limited removal shall be 21 days after the date that the court administrator transmits notice of the denial of the motion for vacation of the order for judgment or judgment. The fee payable by the aggrieved party to the court administrator of district court for limited removal shall be the same as the filing fee prescribed by law for filing of a civil action in district court. The court administrator of district court shall then place the matter on the special term calendar for the date specified in the notice. At the hearing in district court, either party may be represented by a lawyer.

(2) A judge other than the conciliation court judge who denied the motion, shall hear the motion de novo (anew) and may (A) deny the motion or (B) grant the motion. In determining the motion the judge shall consider the entire file plus any affidavits submitted by either party or their lawyers.

(3) The court administrator of district court shall transmit a copy of the order made in district court after de novo hearing to both parties and the venue shall be transferred back to conciliation court.

(Amended effective January 1, 1998; amended effective March 1, 2001; amended effective January 1, 2005; amended effective July 1, 2015; amended effective January 1, 2020; amended effective November 22, 2023; amended effective March 1, 2024.)

Cross Reference: Minn. R. Civ. P. 4.02, 4.06, 5.02, 6.01, 6.02, and 6.05.

1993 Committee Comment

Rule 521(b) establishes a 20-day time period for removing the case to district court. The 20 days is measured from the mailing of the notice of judgment, and the law requires that an additional three days be added to the time period when notice is served by mail. Wilkins v. City of Glencoe, 479 N.W.2d 430 (Minn. App. 1992) (construing Minn. R. Civ. P. 6.05). Computing the deadline can be difficult and confusing for lay persons, and Rule 514 attempts to alleviate this problem by requiring the court administrator to perform the computation and specify the resulting date in the notice of order for judgment, taking into consideration applicable rules, including Rule 503 of these rules and Minn. R. Civ. P. 6.05.

In district court, personal service may only be made by a sheriff or any other person not less than 18 years of age who is not a party to the action. Reichel v. Hefner, 472 N.W.2d 346 (Minn. App. 1991). This applies to personal service under this Rule 521. Service may not be made on Sunday, a legal holiday, or election day. Minnesota Statutes 1990, sections 624.04; 645.44, subdivision 5; Minnesota Constitution, article VII, section 4.

Advisory Committee Comment - 1997 Amendment

Rule 521(e)(1), as amended in 1997, allows limited removal to district court from a denial of a motion to vacate the order for judgment or judgment made pursuant to Rule 520(a) or (b). To obtain limited removal under Rule 521(e)(1), a party must follow the same procedural steps for obtaining removal under Rule 521(b), except that the event that triggers the 20-day time period for effecting removal is the date that the court administrator mails the notice of denial of the motion to vacate the order for judgment or judgment. The law requires that an additional three days be added to the time period when notice is served by mail. Wilkins v. City of Glencoe, 479 N.W.2d 430 (Minn. App. 1992).

Advisory Committee Comment - 2000 Amendment

Under Rule 521(b)(1) as amended in 2000, if the party seeking to remove (appeal) the case to district court is a corporation, the demand for removal must be signed by an attorney authorized to practice law in the district court. This requirement simply restates a requirement recognized by court decision. See World Championship Fighting, Inc. v. Janos, 609 N.W.2d 263 (Minn. App. 2000), rev. denied (Minn. July 25, 2000). A corporation must be represented by a licensed attorney in district court regardless of the fact that the action originated in conciliation court. See Nicollet Restoration, Inc. v. Turnham, 486 N.W.2d 753 (Minn. 1992).

Advisory Committee Comment - 2004 Amendment

Rule 521(d) is amended in 2004 to clarify its application in a situation where one of several co-parties (either co-plaintiffs or co-defendants) removes (appeals) a conciliation court decision while another co-party does not take that action. The committee believes that the conciliation court judgment should become final against any party who does not remove the case and in favor of any party against whom removal is not sought.

Rule 521 establishes an approved and effective means of service by mail to accomplish removal of a conciliation court case to district court for trial de novo. By decision in 2004, the Minnesota Supreme Court held that a party may also rely on the different means of service by mail contained in Minn. R. Civ. P. 4.05. See Roehrdanz v. Brill, 682 N.W.2d 626 (Minn. 2004). Because service under that rule may require a signed receipt from the party being served, such service may not be effective.

Advisory Committee Comment - 2023 Amendments

Rule 521(b)(4) is modified in 2023 to accommodate fee waivers including statutory fee waivers under Minnesota Statutes, sections 169A.63, subdivision 8, paragraph (e), and 609.5314, subdivision 3, paragraph (a).

Advisory Committee Comment - 2024 Amendments

Rule 521 is amended to help clarify that removal documents are filed in a new civil matter in the district court, with a new civil file number, and not in the conciliation court file. This is particularly important for electronic filing as the current technology does not readily allow court staff to simply move a removal document erroneously filed in conciliation court to the district court. Rule 521(b)(3) is also modified to reflect that state court removal forms (CCT402 and CCT502)

MINNESOTA COURT RULES

GENERAL RULES OF PRACTICE

now combine the demand and affidavit of good faith into a single document, which might otherwise be confusing for litigants.