

Nebraska Courthouse Customs and Caution for Pool Camera Operators

Shooting Courtroom Video: The camera and audio in the courtroom are the “eyes and ears” of the public. The public does not have the ability to read what is on the attorney’s notepad or computer screen. They do not have the ability to hear whispered conversations between attorneys, judges, and clients. The camera, when in the courtroom, is to become a member of the public.

#1 - **No Jurors on camera** – ever. Neither inside nor outside the courtroom.

#2 - **Do not ever record a conversation of an attorney.** Not with their co-counsel and absolutely not with their client. Attorney/client communication is always confidential. If you video record, make sure viewers can’t lip read. If you unintentionally pick up portions of a conversation (visual or audio), let the attorney know.

#3 – **Do not zoom in on attorney’s paperwork, computer screens, or other property** – there is a good chance that information on screens and in writing is confidential.

#4 – **Treat all in-courtroom video as though it is livestream coverage.** Anything uploaded to an outside site that violates these guidelines is the responsibility of the pool photographer. (See section on posting video.)

#5 – If you decide to catch some “cut away” shots of an attorney, **turn off the audio.**

#6 – **Read the complete rules:** Article 20: Rules for Expanded News Media Coverage in Nebraska Trial Courts on supremecourt.nebraska.gov – with every request, you sign under the line saying: “I have read Neb. Ct. R. § 6-2001 et. seq. and agree to abide by the same” -- when reviewing the rules note that the word **conference** means **conversation**.

Posting video:

The individual or entity posting the video or image taken inside the courtroom is responsible for the final image presented to the public. Do NOT post raw video that violates these guidelines. Edit wisely.

In the courtroom:

Camera operators need to stay in the location assigned by the Media Coordinator. It is safer to begin video when the judge calls the courtroom to order and to end when the hearing is over – if “cut away” or entrance shots are needed there should be NO AUDIO. No shots of the defendant/attorneys chatting during breaks or after court. Journalists are invited into the courtroom for gavel-to-gavel coverage – from the beginning to end of the formal session – those portions of the trial that the public would be allowed to see.

The inside of the courtroom is NOT the place for follow-up or individual interviews -- take it outside. Also, no editing or playback of recordings – NO additional distractions/noise making during hearings. Camera shutter noises must not be distracting.

No photography is permitted unless you have permission of the judge. This restriction includes cell phone pictures, still photography (whether SLR or any consumer grade camera), cell phone video and video camera recordings. This rule applies to photos and video for either business or personal use. You must file the proper forms before the hearing to get the judge’s permission. On occasion, a judge will allow notetaking or recording for personal use without the form – but ask first.

Courtroom/courthouse considerations:

Use courtesy titles for judges: Using the title “judge” and the judge’s last name is appropriate and expected no matter the level of judge.

Clothing: “No hats” is a fairly common rule, as is a requirement for professional clothing.