

The Minnesota Court Payment Center (CPC) – Process Considerations for Law Enforcement

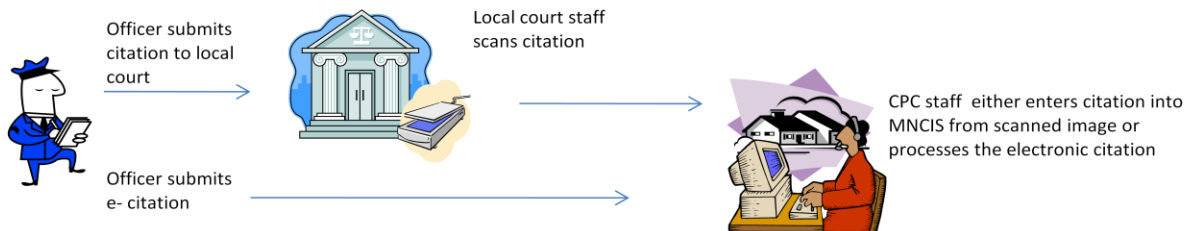
In November 2009, law enforcement agencies were informed that the Minnesota Courts were centralizing the processing of payable citations. The Minnesota Court Payment Center (CPC) began operations that fall, starting with a small number of counties. Additional counties are being phased in, and based on experiences to date; CPC staff have identified and implemented process improvements which will benefit law enforcement, the courts and the public. The following information provides an overview of some of these newly centralized processes; your assistance is also requested.

The graphic below reflects citation processing when a county has implemented CPC citation entry and payment processing. All district courts will be transitioning this work to the CPC:

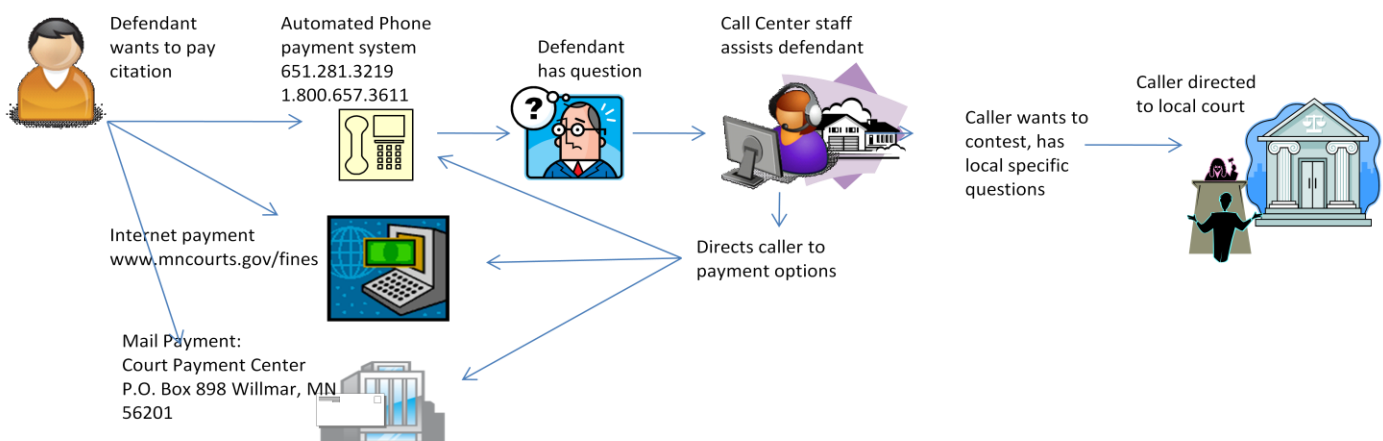
- 85 courts will have implemented payment processing by October, 2010.
- 85 courts will have transferred citation entry responsibilities by July, 2011.
- Hennepin and Ramsey Counties will begin the transition to CPC processing during the FY 12/13 biennium.

DEPICTION OF CPC CITATION PROCESS

Citation Entry Process



Payment Process



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What changes and what remains the same when a county transitions work to CPC?

How, When, and Where to Make Payment:

Payment options have changed, but the same practices are still followed as to when a citizen must pay or appear in court. All payable citations may be paid via the telephone, website, or through the mail to the CPC PO Box*. Centralized payment experience indicates that citizens are very willing to pay using the new convenient telephone and web methods, but they are frustrated if the citation is not yet available to CPC staff or they have been provided with incorrect information regarding the total amount of the fine that is due.

*(*Note: The Court Payment Center post office box located in Willmar, MN is only that; it is not connected to a court office that offers face-to-face service. Face-to-face service, when desired by the defendant, is only offered at the county courthouse in the county where the citation was issued.)*

Recommendations:

- Allow citizens at least 30 days to pay fines (or appear in court).
Note: Counties that have adopted a “respond within 30 days” practice are already following this recommendation.
- Instruct the citizen to allow at least 10 days from the citation issue date for the citation to be processed and available for payment (applies to paper *and* e-citations).
- Do not provide an amount due on a citation or a charge. Rather, allow the court’s automated systems (i.e. telephone and web) to inform the citizen of the total amount due.

The Importance of Prompt Submission of Citations:

All citations (electronic and paper) must be entered into the courts’ case management system, MNCIS, after they are submitted by law enforcement. This means that citations are never payable immediately after the ‘stop’ and they are generally not payable immediately after they are ‘turned in’ by the officer. Experience indicates that the public prefers to use the automated methods described above, but these methods are not available when there are delays in either submission of citations by law enforcement or entry of citations into MNCIS.

Recommendations:

- Find efficient methods of delivering paper citations to the local court ASAP (individually or as an agency).
- Submit the original citation to the court and retain a copy if the agency currently holds the original citations for purposes of entering into law enforcement’s records management system.
- Assure that all e-citations are downloaded before taking a vehicle or hardware out of service.

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Paper Citation Processing:

After citations are submitted to the local court by law enforcement, they are scanned by local court staff and then entered into MNCIS by CPC court clerks. The CPC court clerks handle citations from multiple counties and all agencies throughout the state. Experience indicates that it is very challenging to work with varying citation formats, local practices, and officer handwriting while applying consistent processing rules to all citations. Listed below are recommendations and reminders which will help prevent follow-up action by you or your agency before a citation is processed. These items represent the most common reasons citations are returned for clarification and/or result in invalid/incomplete information passed to BCA and DVS.

Recommendations/Reminders:

- Use black ink to ensure readability of the citation information.
- Clearly indicate location (e.g. Hwy 23 & Main) and “Subdivision of Government (city, county, township, etc.)”.
- Indicate CDL (checkbox or handwritten) if the driver has a Commercial Driver’s License.
- Assure that statute numbers are complete and valid and that offense descriptions, if provided, match the statute number indicated.
- Indicate BAC level, refusal to test, or test results pending for citations that include DUI charges.
- MS §169.89 subd. 1 provides authority for a petty misdemeanor to be enhanced to a misdemeanor, but the officer’s intent is not always clear. Clearly identify which subparagraph applies:
 - Subd. 1 (1): “Endanger person or property” (indicated either by a checkbox or as written on the citation) requires the defendant to appear in court.
(Note: if only accident is noted, defendant is not required to appear)
 - Subd. 1 (2): Must be indicated on the citation if you intend to enhance a charge to a misdemeanor when defendant has two or more petty misdemeanor convictions within the immediate preceding 12-month period.