

**ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
AUTOMATION AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE  
TO THE ILLINOIS JUDICIAL CONFERENCE**

Hon. Grant S. Wegner, Chair

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## I. STATEMENT ON COMMITTEE CONTINUATION

The Automation and Technology Committee ("Committee") of the Illinois Judicial Conference shall provide consultation, guidance, and recommendations regarding standards, policies, and procedures relating to the use of technology and automation within the judicial branch.

Following the 2005 Judicial Conference, the Supreme Court modified the charge of the Automation and Technology Committee to include the development of general guidelines which promote the effective and efficient use of technology and automation in the trial courts, including recommendations for statewide standards, protocols, or procedures. The Committee shall analyze and develop recommendations related to rules and statutory changes that will manage the use of technology within the courts. The Committee's work also includes the review and evaluation of technology applications and their impact on the operation and workflow of the court. The Committee will also research and recommend response protocols to resolve security issues which may affect the use of technology.

For Conference Year 2006, the Supreme Court assigned the Automation and Technology Committee projects which include research and drafting of disaster recovery guidelines for adoption and adaption by all circuit courts. The Committee was also assigned to analyze and evaluate the use of video arraignment and video conferencing technologies and their impact on court proceedings.

During the 2006 Conference Year, the Automation and Technology Committee completed a disaster recovery guide for use in the trial courts. The Disaster Recovery Guide ("Guide") identifies critical topics and procedures recommended for inclusion in a court disaster recovery plan. The Guide outlines topics that are necessary for the development of a consolidated disaster recovery plan while still allowing for the autonomy of local departments and offices to include processes for their respective environment and needs. The Guide includes general topics, sample responses and templates that may be customized for each county where more detailed information and practices can be included for county and circuit-wide disaster recovery plans. The Guide also facilitates the sharing of resources, practices, and procedures among neighboring counties/circuits. The Disaster Recovery Guide is formatted in PDF with a Table of Contents which provides document links to sections of the Disaster Recovery Guide. Also included in the Guide is a Disaster Planning Checklist and research material that the Committee used to develop the Guide.

The Committee began discussions regarding the use of video conferencing and video arraignment equipment in the circuit courts. Further research and analysis will include the benefits, costs and concerns of video arraignment systems and additional research in the technology required to support these systems.

## II. SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

During the 2006 Conference Year, the Automation and Technology Committee developed a Disaster Recovery Guide for distribution and use in the trial courts. The Committee also began researching the technologies associated with video arraignment and video conferencing and their use within the judiciary.

**A. Disaster Recovery Guide**

After reviewing several publications, planning documents from the National Center for State Courts and other individual states, articles regarding lessons learned and technical guides for maintaining the continuity of technologies and business operations, the Automation and Technology Committee began compiling requirements and components necessary for disaster planning within the Illinois trial courts. Discussing the planning process necessary to prepare for an interruption of court services was critical to determining the scope of the Disaster Recovery Guide and the parties that should be involved in the planning process. The Committee also discussed and identified key components of a thorough disaster recovery and contingency plan. Regular review processes and testing practices identified in a disaster plan are necessary to maintain a useful and current disaster recovery plan. The Committee included in the Disaster Recovery Guide testing procedures and upkeep practices to allow changes to a county's disaster plan.

The Automation and Technology Committee recommends that the Disaster Recovery Guide be distributed to the Chief Circuit Judges for use within their circuits. The Disaster Recovery Guide would also be available upon request via a CD-ROM disc. Finally, the Automation and Technology Committee recommends that the Disaster Recovery Guide be reviewed annually for enhancements.

**B. Video Arraignment and Video Conferencing Technologies**

The Automation and Technology Committee has discussed the technology generally used to provide video conferencing and video arraignment sessions for court hearings. Basic video conferencing technology can be provided using desktop computers and a high-speed Internet connection. In addition to a PC-based video conference system, a standard telephone conferencing system can provide the audio conferencing capabilities needed for teleconferences. However, given the need to provide video arraignment in multiple courtrooms, variables in Internet bandwidth and speeds, the use of recording systems in courtrooms, and the possible need to integrate evidence presentation systems for such hearings, a higher-end solution may be required. Even with the benefits of reduced travel costs for attorneys or witnesses and the savings associated with prisoner transportation, identifying who should pay for such systems and how to integrate video arraignment systems into the existing court infrastructures is critical for successful implementation and ongoing support.

**III. PROPOSED COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT CONFERENCE YEAR**

For Conference Year 2007, the Automation and Technology Committee recommends that it be assigned the continued analysis and review of video conferencing and video arraignment systems for use in the judiciary based upon that which is permitted by law. The Committee is also receptive to any other assignments from the Supreme Court or the Judicial Conference Executive Committee.

**IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Automation and Technology Committee respectfully requests to be continued for the 2007 Conference Year. The Committee recommends that the Illinois Judicial Conference approve the Committee to forward its Disaster Recovery Guide to the Supreme Court with the recommendation that it be distributed to the Chief Circuit Judges and that it be reviewed annually and made available upon request to Illinois judicial staff via CD-ROM disc.